



An Illustrated Timeline of VFW MILESTONES

VFW's history spans all 10 decades of the 20th century and well over a decade into the 21st century. During those tumultuous times, it achieved notoriety in many facets of society—veterans service, defense preparedness and community service.

Some of those accomplishments appear on the pages that follow. In significant instances, success was mostly attributable to VFW. In others, goals were attained through alliance with additional groups.



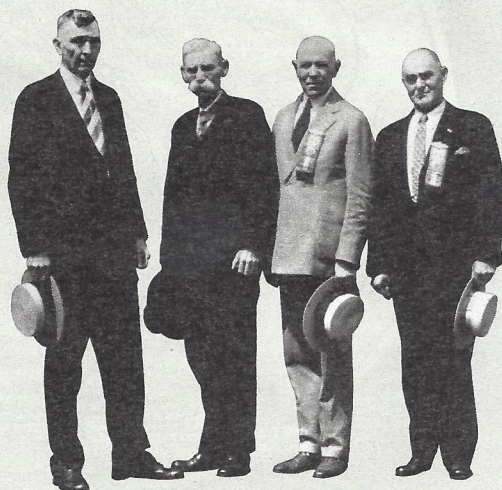
James C. Putnam, first leader of AVFS.



1899 1900s

MEMBERSHIP: 1,000

1899 American Veterans of Foreign Service (Columbus, Ohio) is formed by 13 veterans of the Spanish-American War, mostly of the 17th Infantry Regiment.



Four of the **original founders** in Columbus, Ohio: James Romanis, Oscar Brookins, George Kelly and John Malloy.

1899 **Army of the Philippines** (Denver, Colo.) comes together in December and is created by vets of the 1st Colorado Volunteer Infantry Regiment.

Brig. Gen. Irving Hale, a moving force behind the Army of the Philippines.

1903 Three Pennsylvania groups form another AVFS from vets of the Philippines War and Boxer Rebellion (China).



H.O. Kelley
Altoona, 1901



Robert S. Hansbury
Philadelphia, 1902



1904 First issue of **Foreign Service** (November), predecessor of VFW magazine, is published.

1905 AVFS of Ohio and of Pennsylvania amalgamate in Altoona, Pa.

1910s

MEMBERSHIP: 5,000 in 1915



1914 **Veterans of Foreign Wars** is formally born from merger of the AVFS (Ohio-Pennsylvania) and Army of the Philippines (Denver) at the Pittsburgh Convention in September. Ladies Auxiliary also is formed. General Order 10 had changed the name on Aug. 1 after a Post vote.



1917 **Theodore Roosevelt** becomes a member. The ex-President joins in July in Pittsburgh. He is the first of eight U.S. Presidents to eventually join VFW.

1917 **War Risk Insurance Act Amendments**, advocated by VFW, are its first legislative victory. VFW National Headquarters is established in New York City.

1918 Troop Support—letter-writing campaign and ambulance drive is launched for Doughboys in France. Soldiers serving there are actively recruited into VFW.

VFW is incorporated on June 14 in Washington, D.C.

1919 **VFW National Service Bureau (NSB)** is created in Washington, D.C., to serve returning Doughboys of World War I.

1920s

MEMBERSHIP: 76,669 in 1929

1920 Departments are created (first in D.C.) to handle activities within the states.



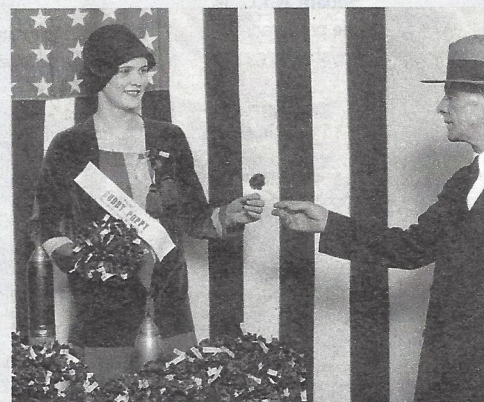
Theresa Erickson

1921 **Women WWI nurses** qualify for membership after serving overseas in France.

1921 **Tomb of the Unknown Soldier** is dedicated.

Veterans Bureau is created.

Military Order of the Cootie is formed.



1922 **Buddy Poppy** program is launched to assist disabled veterans of WWI.

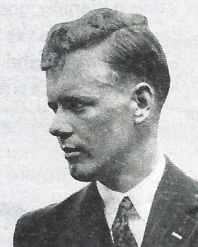
1924 **House Veterans Affairs Committee** is the first congressional body created specifically for war vets.

1924 **World War Adjusted Compensation Act** provides a deferred cash bonus for WWI vets.



1925 **VFW National Home** in Eaton Rapids, Mich., begins its tradition of caring for families in need.

1926 Congress officially designates Nov. 11 **Armistice Day**.



1927 Aviator **Charles Lindbergh** becomes an honorary VFW member during the national convention in Providence, R.I.



1929 VFW recovery of U.S. remains from North Russia marks the organization's entry into the **MIA accounting** quest.

1930s

MEMBERSHIP: 465,540 in 1933

1930 Anti-communism rally in Union Square, N.Y.C., is the precursor to Loyalty Day.



1930 National Headquarters is established in Kansas City, Mo.

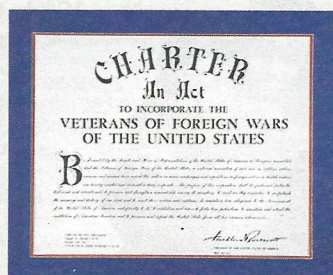
1930 World War Service Disability Pension Act (P.L. 522) is a clear-cut legislative victory for VFW.

1930 Veterans Administration (VA) is created after strong advocacy by VFW. VA incorporates the Veterans Bureau.



1931 VFW succeeds in its campaign to make the *Star-Spangled Banner* the national anthem.

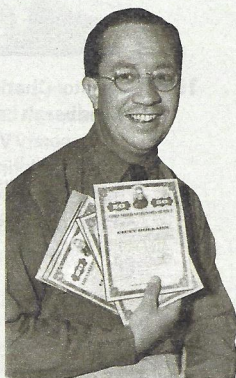
1932 The "Bonus March" in Washington, D.C., though not endorsed by VFW nationally, goes down in history as the first mass demonstration in the nation's capital.



1936 VFW Congressional Charter (P.L. 630) bestows special rights and privileges.



1936 Boy Scout-VFW plan of cooperation makes the relationship (dating back to 1915) official.



1936 Bonus bonds issued to WWI vets made immediately redeemable. The bonds' collective worth: \$2.4 billion.

1937 VFW inaugurates a permanent national youth program to offset the ill effects of the Depression on children. It starts with full sponsorship of Junior Softball.



1938 Armistice Day (Nov. 11) becomes a legal holiday (P.L. 510) after a 20-year campaign waged by VFW.



1941



1944 GI Bill of Rights (P.L. 346) provides unprecedented benefits for WWII veterans. VFW is instrumental in its passage.

1946 Membership reaches more than 1.5 million in the immediate aftermath of WWII, which boosted the ranks by 728% from 1941.

1949 First Washington Conference is held by VFW national and state officials to lobby directly on Capitol Hill. Gen. Omar Bradley addresses the first gathering.

1940s

MEMBERSHIP: 1,554,444 in 1946

Boxing champ
Gene Tunney
becomes national
director of VFW
Youth Activities.



1942 VFW Aviation Cadet program recruits 65,000 air recruits for the armed forces.



1947 VFW's National Marble Tournament is first held in Boys Town, Neb. A later tournament makes the pages of *Life* magazine.



1949 VFW celebrates its 50th anniversary with an appearance by President Harry S. Truman, a member of Kansas City Post 35.

1950s

MEMBERSHIP: 1,117,825 in 1959

1950-51 Nationwide community service wins Freedoms Foundation awards.

1950 Life membership is instituted—an innovation to attract and retain new members.

1952 *Veterans Readjustment Assistance Act* (Korean War GI Bill) passes with a strong push by VFW.

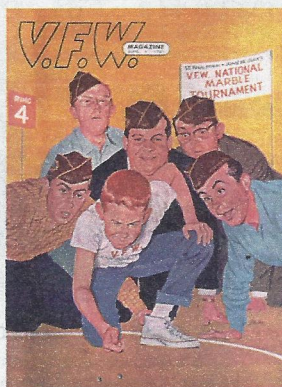
1952 **National Disaster Relief Fund** is established on a permanent basis.

1954 Nov. 11 is designated **Veterans Day** (P.L. 380) to honor veterans of WWII, Korea and subsequent wars.

1955 Last Commander-in-Chief is elected directly by delegates at the Boston convention.



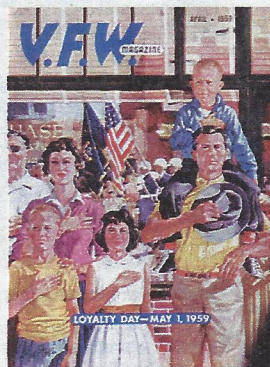
1951 *Foreign Service* becomes **VFW magazine** (January).



1956 150,000 kids take part in the **VFW marble competition** nationwide, proving to be VFW's most popular sponsored sport.



1958 VFW becomes a full partner in **Voice of Democracy (VOD)**, a scholarship program for college-bound students. VFW assumes primary sponsorship three years later (1961).



1958 **Loyalty Day** is established at the request of VFW as a means to publicly display responsible citizenship and patriotism.



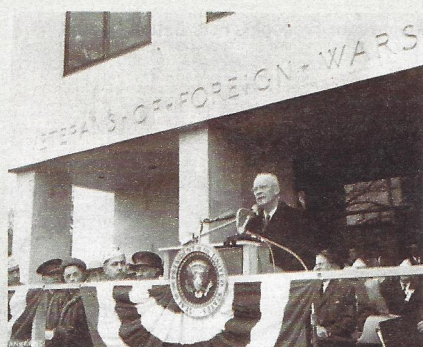
1959 Minnesota VFW/Ladies Auxiliary raises \$325,000 toward dedication of the **VFW Cancer Research Center** at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis. It's the largest single-Department project ever undertaken.

1960s

MEMBERSHIP: 1,496,911 in 1969

1970s

MEMBERSHIP: 1,875,047 in 1979



1960 VFW Washington Memorial Building is dedicated.



1961 Teen-er Baseball leagues total 189 with 14,000 players in 22 states.



1962 Lite-A-Bike program: a \$300,000 project with 3M Company of St. Paul provides "Scotchlite" reflector tape. 50,000 VFW members from 4,500 Posts take part.



1966 Veterans Readjustment Benefits Act (Vietnam War GI Bill) becomes law.

1968 VFW's Tet Aggression Relief Project raises \$85,000 for South Vietnamese civilians and disabled veterans.

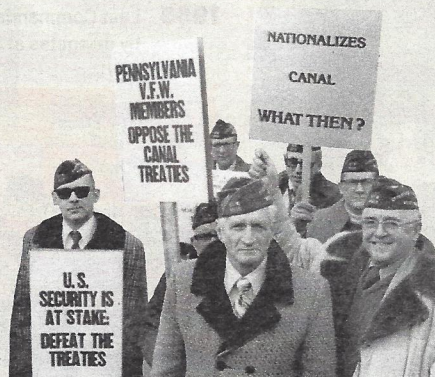
1969 Major support campaign for Vietnam vets and POWs gets under way. VFW circulates a petition recording 2 million signatures that demands humane treatment of POWs.

1971 Senate Veterans Affairs Committee is formed after two decades of VFW's struggle to create it.

1972-77 Four major pieces of legislation favorable to Vietnam vets are passed with VFW backing.



1974 VFW's 75th anniversary is recognized by a commemorative postage stamp.



1977-78 "Save the Panama Canal" campaign becomes "the greatest issue of the day" for VFW, and includes a major rally in Washington.

1977 Sons of VFW includes 16,000 boys.



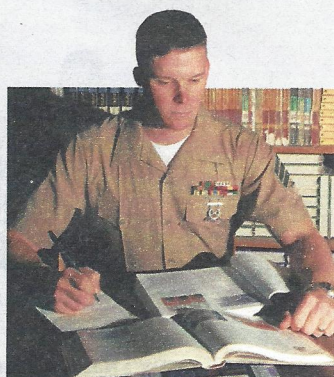
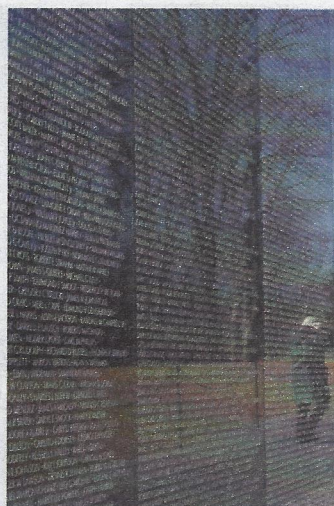
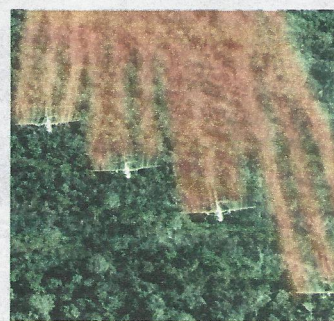
1978 Women are formally admitted to VFW.

Veterans preference in hiring is preserved.

Veterans Day is returned to Nov. 11.

1979 Vet Centers are authorized to provide emotional stress counseling for Vietnam vets.

VFW Political Action Committee—the first for a veterans group—is created.



1984 Montgomery GI Bill extends education benefits to qualified active-duty personnel.

1980s

MEMBERSHIP: 2,000,149 in 1984

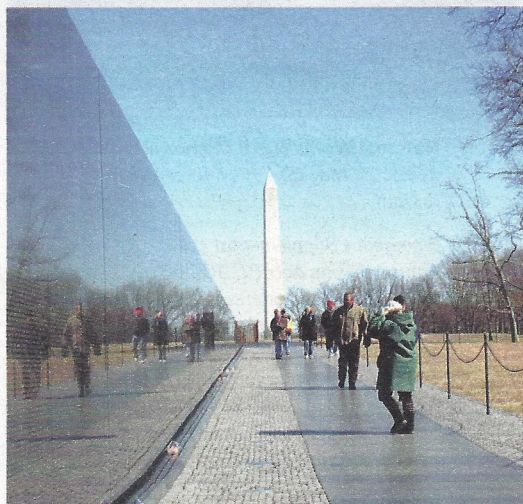
1990s

MEMBERSHIP: 2,167,788 in 1992

1980 VFW calls for an **Agent Orange** study to determine the health effects of the chemical defoliant on Vietnam vets exposed to it.

Compensation for **Agent Orange** exposure becomes a decade-long crusade.

1981 VFW wins the first-ever case for **PTSD** disability compensation for a Vietnam veteran.



1982 **Vietnam Veterans Memorial** is dedicated. VFW contributes \$300,000. VFW was the first major backer of the VVM, and supporter of the later statue.

1984 **Membership** passes the 2 million mark.

1985 VFW donates \$122,000 to the **Statue of Liberty** restoration fund.

1988 **Department of Veterans Affairs Act** passes, a long-sought VFW goal.



1989 VA begins operating as a Cabinet-level department with a full secretary.

Court of Veterans Appeals is created.



1991 **Heart of America Rally** for Persian Gulf War vets in K.C. draws 75,000 spectators. Largest troop-support activity ever sponsored by VFW.

VFW's **Operation Hometown** sends 100,000 care packages to troops in the Persian Gulf.

1991-98 Five major laws to treat and compensate **Persian Gulf War** veterans pass with VFW support.

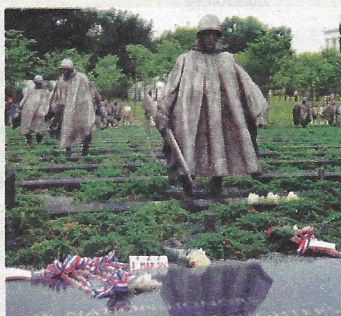


1993 **Vietnam Women's Memorial** is dedicated. VFW contributes \$76,000.

1994 VA Golden Age Games sponsorship by VFW begins with \$50,000 per year.

Persian Gulf War Veterans Benefits Act (P.L. 103-446) is signed Nov. 4, covering medical claims, education, employment and housing.

1995 **Korean War Memorial** is dedicated. VFW donates \$650,000.



1995 **Oklahoma City bombing** victims receive \$40,000 in VFW donations from Posts nationwide.

Patriot's Pen, an essay writing contest, is created for 7th- and 8th-graders to express their views about democracy.



1996 **Veterans Health Care Eligibility Reform Act** provides for a new VA enrollment system.

VFW's **Operation Uplink** begins. The free phone card program allows hospitalized veterans and deployed troops to call home.

VFW Foundation is created to support VFW programs and services.

VFW establishes an **Internet** presence with a website, www.vfw.org, on Feb. 29.

1997 **Women in Military Service for America Memorial** is dedicated. VFW donates \$118,000.

1998 VFW Posts raise \$100,000 for **March of Dimes**.

Voice of Democracy gives \$2.6 million in college scholarships and prizes to students in every state.

1999 VFW celebrates its **100th anniversary** highlighted by the national convention in Kansas City.



VFW's **Military Assistance Program** is created to provide consistent troop support.



The **Kahle Fund** is endowed to offer activities for wounded veterans.

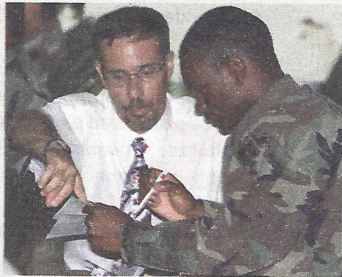
The **Smart/Maher National Citizenship Education Teacher Award** is created to recognize instructors who promote patriotism and troop support in the classroom.

2000s

MEMBERSHIP: 1,944,151 in 2000

- 2000** *Veterans Millennium Health Care & Benefits Act (P.L. 106-117)* signed Nov. 30, 1999, authorizes VA to cover the cost of emergency care for uninsured veterans at non-VA facilities.

Veterans Claims Assistance Act (P.L. 106-475), signed Nov. 9, restores VA's duty to assist veterans applying for VA benefits.



- 2001** VFW's **Benefits Delivery at Discharge** outreach network to servicemembers about to be discharged is established on military bases, now totaling 16 offices.

Veterans Survivor Benefits Improvements Act (P.L. 107-14), signed June 5, increases financial assistance for families of military personnel killed in the line of duty.

Veterans Education & Benefits Expansion Act (P.L. 107-103), signed Dec. 27, increases Montgomery GI Bill payments by 48%.

Presumptive service connection is granted for *Type II diabetes* linked to Agent Orange exposure.

VFW Centennial Plaza, featuring the Citizen-Soldier statue, is dedicated on Oct. 5.



VFW and Ladies Auxiliary sponsor **Unite for Liberty**, an entertainment event held in Jersey City, N.J., to promote patriotism and show support for troops in the wake of 9/11.

Attack on America Fund is created to assist families of active-duty troops killed at the Pentagon on 9/11. A year later, \$120,000 has been distributed.

- 2002** Presumptive service connection is extended to four more illnesses associated with the **Persian Gulf War** service.

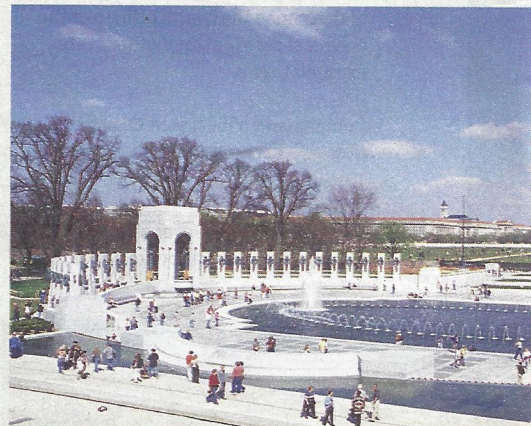


- 2003** **VFW Charter Act** extends membership to recipients of hostile/imminent danger pay. It also clarifies one of VFW's purposes as charitable.

VFW expands its **Internet** presence with a new web-based relational database.

- 2004** *Servicemembers Civil Relief Act* eases financial burdens on activated reservists.

VFW's **Unmet Needs** program is created to financially assist service members or recently discharged vets: \$4.7 million in emergency grants has been given to military families, most commonly for housing.



National World War II Memorial is dedicated May 29—VFW donates \$6 million.

- 2005** *Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act (P.L. 109-13)*, announced July 1, increases the death gratuity for service members killed in a war zone to \$100,000; the traumatic disability insurance supplement for those wounded in action to \$100,000; and Servicemembers Group Life Insurance jumps to \$400,000.

VFW donates \$800,000 to families along the Gulf Coast displaced by **Hurricane Katrina**.

VFW's **The National Defense**, a nationally syndicated military radio talk show is launched.

Legacy Life Membership program is established.



- 2006** **National World War I Museum** is opened Dec. 2—VFW donates \$350,000 in total—in K.C.

- 2007** VFW's **National Military Services** is created, incorporating *Operation Uplink* (1996), the *Military Assistance Program* (1999) and *Unmet Needs* (2004). NMS has hosted more than 420,000 service and family members at deployment and homecoming events.



2010s

MEMBERSHIP: 1,360,320 in 2013



2008 Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act (P.L. 110-52), signed into law June 26, provides generous education benefits for Iraq and Afghanistan veterans. Such a bill had been fought for by VFW for 10 years before passage.

National Defense Authorization Act (a provision of), signed Jan. 28, extends for 5 years free VA medical care to Afghanistan and Iraq War vets.

2009 Veterans Health Care Budget Reform & Transparency Act (P.L. 111-81), signed into law Oct. 22, guarantees advance appropriations for VA health care accounts.

President VFW Members

Theodore Roosevelt	At Large, New York
Harry S Truman	Post 35, Kansas City
Dwight D. Eisenhower	Post 3279, Abilene
John F. Kennedy	Post 5880, Brockton
Lyndon B. Johnson	Post 856, Austin
Richard M. Nixon	Post 2081, Whittier
Gerald R. Ford	Post 830, Grand Rapids
George H.W. Bush	Post 4344, Houston

2010 Caregivers & Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act (P.L. 111-163), enacted May 5, provides assistance to family caregivers along with addressing four other issues.

Veterans Benefits Act (P.L. 111-275), enacted in October, provides a wide-ranging package of benefits.

Affordable Care Act includes a provision ensuring that all VA and Pentagon health care programs are recognized as meeting minimum coverage standards.



2011 Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Improvements Act (P.L. 111-377), signed Jan. 4, simplifies the application process and credits service of activated reservists.



VFW **tornado relief assistance** tops \$103,000 for the 2011 season. Included are the tornadoes that ripped through Fort Leonard Wood and Joplin, Mo.

Restoring GI Bill Fairness Act (P.L. 112-26), signed Aug. 3, authorizes greater tuition payments at private schools.

VOW to Hire Heroes Act (P.L. 112-56), signed Nov. 21, expands training and education programs, mandates transition assistance, strengthens re-employment rights for reservists and offers tax credits to businesses that hire vets.

VFW-PAC is dissolved, ending endorsement of electoral candidates. It was created in 1979.

2012 Honoring America's Veterans & Caring for Camp Lejeune Families Act (P.L. 112-154), enacted Aug. 6, includes five other various provisions.

VFW donates \$124,000 to victims of **Hurricane Sandy** in New York and New Jersey.

VFW's **National Council of Administration**, the governing body, is expanded to include representation from all 53 Departments.

2013 VFW and Student Veterans of America formalize ties on Jan. 3 to further the mutual goals of both organizations.

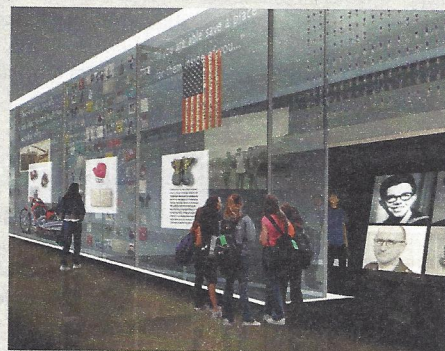


Improving Transparency of Education Opportunities for Veterans Act (P.L. 112-249), enacted Jan. 10, protects veterans from unscrupulous, for-profit schools.

Service tuition assistance programs are reinstated by an amendment to P.L. 113-006 signed on March 26.

Stolen Valor Act (P.L. 113-12), signed June 3, restores protection to military awards for valor.

VFW sends \$40,000 in relief to victims of the tornado in Moore, Okla.



Vietnam Education Center (under way)—VFW donates \$650,000.



National Museum of the Army (under way)—VFW donates \$500,000.

The American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial (under way)—VFW donates \$100,000.

VFW-SportClips Scholarship Program. A joint effort with the hair-cutting chain awards educational grants of up to \$5,000 to qualified vets.

VFW Family Tree

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS traces its origins to veterans of Cuba and the Philippines who formed separate groups in Ohio, Colorado and Pennsylvania. All had similar aims and were founded at, or shortly after, the turn of the century. Because of their common



purposes, they all eventually united to form the premier veterans organization of America.

The tree below charts VFW's organizational stages, showing all the parent groups and their paths to the creation of what we know today as VFW.

