VETERAN'S CLUB AND VETERAN'S MEMORIAL TIMELINE

<u>VETERAN'S CLUB</u>

The Veteran's Club was founded in 2004 by a handful of veterans. They included the following veterans: Dale Otney, Bill Gray, George Thompson, Ed Knopf, Ron Regan, Dick Johnson, Richard Macleod, Cliff Kunde, Fred Hoehn, Bill Scharek, Loyal Whiteside, Don Default, Jim Munro, Jim Magoon, Frank Schoone, Ken Farber, Tom Hayes, Bud Ruby and Don Lynch. I apologize for any names that may have been missed. Tom Hayes also gave me a lot of insight about the beginning days. Trudy Gist was the first female veteran to join. She helped recruit male members by going around to the Ladies Luncheons and other women's clubs encouraging the women to get their husbands involved in the Veteran's Club.

Dale Otney was our first President; it was his dream to form an Honor Guard and build a Memorial. Since Dale had to resign due to an illness, Bill Gray became our President for the next three years. It took over two years to change our name to Continental Veteran's Association.

Our Veteran's Club, in the beginning, had to rely on other organizations to help with our programs and ceremonies such as the marine rifle squad, Orlando American Legion honor guard and others. In time we were able to put together our own programs. While the Memorial was being built, our Honor Guard was formed with the help of Bob Harbor and Dick Zettlemoyer. The first members of the Honor Guard had mix and match uniforms. In time and with more money, they were able to get matching uniforms.

We were also able to form a Color Guard. Several of the original members are still active in our holiday programs. They are a big part of our organization in many ways. Several clubs donated money as well as the first set of service flags for the Memorial and still support our Club today.

The original members laid the foundation for our Memorial as well as the foundation for what our Club is today.

There are many stories about our Club that are left unsaid…just don't have the room for all of them. Without the help of Bill Gray's records, details such as a list of original names and timeframe, price of dirt used for the Memorial, cost and quantity of concrete, the cost of color guard shirts with patches and much more would have been forgotten or lost.

VETERAN'S MEMORIAL

The Veteran's Club, in 2007, approached Continental Country Club for a place to build the Memorial. After much discussion, the present site just west of the main entrance on SR44 was selected.

Ed Knopf designed the Memorial in the shape of a pentagon. When the design was finished and approved by the members, a single flagpole was placed at the center of the Memorial. Virginia Newby donated the flag and pole.

A sign was made in 2008 showing the future site. Between 2007 and 2009, money was earned from chili cookoffs, hot dog night and donations.

Tom Hayes and George Thompson were tasked with selling Memorial bricks and boy did they sell!

Articles were placed in the Echo newsletter asking for donations and the community responded. Alot of money had to be raised by this small group of dedicated men before any work could begin. Many hours and much thought went into the design that was to be placed around the granite blocks with the five service flags and the American flag. Then the actual work began with dirt brought in, forms for concrete and gray stones put into place, flagpole bases set in concrete and concrete walkways were poured. Once the community saw the Memorial taking place, brick sales really took off. With brick sales and donations, four granite benches were added.

I hope this gives a little insight as to how our Veteran's Memorial and Veteran's Club got started and the selfless effort that the dedicated men and women put forth to make it what it is today. I wish I could go back in time and honor the original members when they were still here with us. I am sure they got alot of satisfaction by just looking at the Memorial and knowing what they helped create so that others can enjoy it now and in the future.

For God & Country

Billy Schools, Commander