

History of American Legion Post TH-02

Sergeant Thomas Oliver Ahlberg Memorial Post No. TH02
Pattaya City, Chon Buri, Kingdom of Thailand
Calendar Year 2024



Introduction

Building upon the administrative stability and operational infrastructure solidified in its preceding years, the Sergeant Thomas Oliver Ahlberg Memorial Post No. TH02 entered 2024 focused on physical relocation, enhanced virtual capability, and localized humanitarian outreach. Operating under the overseas jurisdiction of the Department of France, the Post successfully completed another dynamic administrative year while managing expanding regional caseloads across Thailand's Eastern Seaboard. Through extensive naval liaisons, impactful community infrastructure funding, and dedicated veteran repatriation and funeral honors, the Post preserved its core mission to eliminate geographical isolation and provide a vital lifeline for American veterans residing in the region.

1. Post Identity & Regional Alignment

Throughout 2024, Post TH02 aggressively expanded its cooperative frameworks with allied veterans' organizations, local charitable foundations, and diplomatic and defense entities to fortify its regional footprint.

- **Embassy Liaison & Consular Pipelines:** To protect and serve veterans on the Eastern Seaboard, the Post hosted the Bangkok US Embassy's American Citizen Services (ACS) unit for a localized consular outreach event in Pattaya on September 20–21, 2024. Concurrently, Post Commander Bill Ahlberg maintained direct engagement with defense entities, attending the National POW/MIA Recognition Day ceremony hosted by DPAA Detachment 1 at the Lampang Provincial Government Center.
- **Cross-Organizational Collaboration:** Post TH02 sustained tight operational bonds with neighboring veteran groups. On November 11, 2024 (Veterans Day), the Post formed a multi-post coalition alongside VFW Post 12146 and VFW Post 9876 to render full dual military funeral honors for departed local veterans.
- **Joint Humanitarian Initiatives:** Broadening its community advocacy, the Post successfully concluded a major localized humanitarian and infrastructural fundraising campaign via its Nathan Kent Foundation on October 23, 2024. The initiative successfully financed structural masonry repairs for a local temple's deteriorated cremation furnace to prevent indigent veterans from being buried in pauper's graves.
- **International & Diplomatic Ties:** On August 16, 2024, Commander Bill Ahlberg traveled to Kanchanaburi to represent Post TH02 at the annual World War II V-J Day Commemoration ceremony at Don Rak War Cemetery, an event formally hosted by the Embassy of the Netherlands.

2. Executive Leadership & Officer Rotations

The 2024 operational cycle was defined by administrative adaptation as the structural leadership shifted into an expanded officer slate designed to manage expanding regional veteran caseloads.

The Administrative Slate

Under the guidance of the executive leadership, the administration effectively oversaw continuous welfare operations, digital system integrations, and multi-agency memorial services. Notably, Michael J. Chitwood continued his dedicated service to the post by executing dual-hatted responsibilities as both the Post Adjutant and Finance Officer.

2024 Expanded Slate Officers

Position	Late 2024 Operational Cycle Name
Post Commander	William M. Ahlberg
1st Vice Commander	Gary A. Mellor
2nd Vice Commander	Richard Garcia
Post Adjutant / Finance	Michael J. Chitwood (Dual-Hatted)
Sergeant-at-Arms	Jeff Drake
Executive Committee Trustees	Roger Knorr, Wayne 'Chet' Drowns, David Dunne

3. Financial Milestones & Post Home Preservation

Faced with long-term planning considerations and evolving membership requirements, the Post Executive Committee prioritized establishing a renewed, stable physical infrastructure for its membership.

- **The New Post Home:** Following the conclusion of its previous long-term lease terms, the Post successfully established its brand-new home facility. On January 24, 2024, the Post hosted its very first general membership meeting inside the new facility, which was situated two doors down from its previous venue.
- **2025 Campaign Launch:** On August 12, 2024, the Post officially initiated its 2025 calendar year renewal campaign, securing financial stability into the next term by logging an opening surge of 56 early member renewals.
- **Institutional Performance Recognition:** The Post's administrative efficiency and fundraising capabilities were recognized at the highest levels. On August 3, 2024, the American Legion Department of France formally issued major performance awards to Post TH02 for the administrative term, highlighting the Post as **Small Post Over the Top (Runner-Up)** and the **1st Post to Meet Department Goal (Runner-Up)**.

4. Technological Adaptations & Logistics

With the acquisition of a new physical facility, Post leadership took proactive measures to bridge geographical gaps for remote and out-of-town veterans through dedicated virtual workflows.

- **Mitigating Relocation Hiccups:** On February 24, 2024, despite minor operational hiccups stemming from the facility relocation, the post aggressively prepared to implement Google Meet streaming capabilities to guarantee online accessibility for remote veterans.
- **Formal Virtual Infrastructure:** On April 24, 2024, the post officially launched its formalized virtual streaming infrastructure, successfully enabling out-of-town members to actively participate in general membership meetings online.

5. Major Events & Institutional Initiatives

Despite the logistical demands of a facility relocation, Post TH02 successfully executed military commemorations, high-profile naval civilian-liaison events, and extensive youth charity initiatives

- **Children's Day Outreach:** On January 16, 2024, Post Commander Bill Ahlberg hosted an outreach booth for Thailand's national Children's Day, successfully feeding over 600 attendees and distributing 300 gifts to local children.
- **Namesake Remembrance:** On May 4, 2024, the post observed a solemn day of remembrance marking the 54th anniversary of the Vietnam War combat death of post namesake Sergeant Thomas Oliver Ahlberg.
- **Memorial Day BBQ:** On May 21, 2024, post leadership organized a Memorial Day BBQ immediately following the monthly meeting to formally honor fallen US service members.
- **US Navy Ship Tours:** Highlighting unique opportunities for military liaison and fellowship, the Post coordinated multiple high-profile naval vessel tours throughout the year:
 - *April 6, 2024:* An exclusive naval ship tour of the Independence-class littoral combat ship **USS Manchester**.
 - *June 11, 2024:* A special naval tour of an Independence-class littoral combat ship at Chuk Samet Port, Sattahip, utilizing 10 designated operational slots.
 - *June 26, 2024:* A historical tour of the US Navy Seventh Fleet Flagship, the amphibious command ship **USS Blue Ridge (LCC-19)**, at Laem Chabang Port.
 - *November 10, 2024:* A specialized ship tour of the Spearhead-class expeditionary fast transport vessel **USNS City of Bismarck (T-EPF-9)**.
- **Membership Appreciation:** On June 19, 2024, the post officially concluded its 2024 membership drive with a high success rate, celebrating early 4th of July festivities with a community appreciation BBQ.
- **Annual Christmas Charity Drive:** Continuing its established holiday tradition, the post hosted its annual Christmas outreach event on December 28, 2024, following an abbreviated final meeting of the year. Organized for the Take Care of Kids Thailand Foundation orphanage, the post distributed gifts alongside a 16,000 THB cash donation.

6. Membership Growth and Enrollment Surge

Post TH02 maintained an incredibly active and diverse recruiting pipeline throughout 2024, culminating in historic milestones and breaking previous recruitment records.

2024 New Member Roll

The Post formally welcomed the following veterans into the permanent ranks of the organization throughout the calendar year:

- **January 22, 2024:** Wayne 'Chet' Drowns, a dual-service veteran (US Army & USAF Reserve) and employee of the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) at the US Embassy Bangkok.
- **March 2, 2024:** David Sewell (USAF contractor), Jeff Stringfield (USAF & US Army veteran), and Jeffrey Priest (retired US Army veteran) were inducted during a targeted membership expansion.
- **September 26, 2024:** The post recorded a significant single-day "surge" of new veteran enrollment, officially inducting 9 new members spanning the Army, Navy, and Air Force.

Year-End Metrics

Owing to the success of its formalized membership drives, early renewal surges, and localized outreach, the post officially closed out the 2024 calendar year with a record high of **160 active members**.

7. Taps, Memorial Tributes, and Repatriation Operations

The solemn execution of emergency veteran assistance, final repatriation duties, and military funeral honors remained the foundational priority of the Post executive leadership.

Funeral Honors for Robert "Bobby" Elliot Clark

On March 16, 2024, the Pattaya American Legion Honor Guard provided full military funeral honors for USAF veteran and local community leader Robert "Bobby" Elliot Clark, a prominent co-founder of the Pattaya Sports Club.

Tribute to Post TH01 Commander Bruce Templeman

On March 23, 2024, Post Commander Bill Ahlberg traveled to attend final funeral services honoring the sudden passing of Bruce Templeman, the prominent sitting Commander of American Legion Post TH01 (Ubon Ratchathani) and VFW Post 10217 (Korat).

Joint Repatriation of TSGT Lee Schading

On June 29–30, 2024, in a joint operation with VFW Post 9876, the post conducted a memorial service and laid to rest the ashes of 20-year USAF veteran TSGT Lee Schading at Wat Chai Mongkon. Following the local ceremonies, Post leadership efficiently managed the administrative and legal requirements to prepare the repatriation of his remains to Fort Snelling National Cemetery in Minnesota.

Veterans Day Combined Memorial Formations

On November 11, 2024, rendering final tributes with deep fraternal commitment, the Post's multi-post coalition rendered full dual military funeral honors for departed local veterans L. David Walker and Bruce Thomas Robarge.

Funeral Honors for L. David Walker

On November 11, 2024, the Post observed a solemn day as members paid their respects to a fallen veteran. The first tribute was military funeral honors for L. David Walker, attended by members of VFW Post 12146, VFW Post 9876, and American Legion Post TH-02.

Condolences for Mr. James "Jim" Rusciano

On November 23, 2024, the Commander expressed the condolences of the members of the veteran community to the family of Mr. James "Jim" Rusciano, a USAF Vietnam veteran, who passed away peacefully at his home in Ubon Ratchathani.

In Memoriam

Members of TH-02



Robert (Bobby) Clark

04 Apr 1944 - 08 Mar 2024

USAF



Lee Edward Schading

30 Nov 1949 - 30 May 2024

USAF



L David Walker

06 Jan 1952 - 07 Nov 2024

USA



James Rusciano

18 May 1950 - 20 Nov 2024

USAF

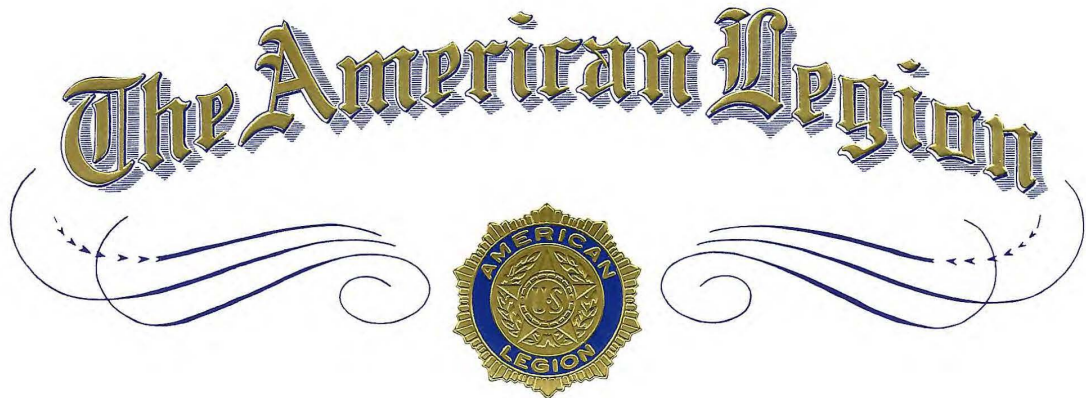
Conclusion

Calendar Year 2024 stands as a testament to institutional adaptation, physical and digital modernization, and deep-seated fraternal service for American Legion Post TH02. Facing the logistical hurdles of establishing a new physical facility, the Post successfully implemented permanent virtual streaming infrastructure, expanded its community outreach via the Nathan Kent Foundation, and logged an all-time record high of 160 active members. Through extensive cooperation with the US Embassy, defense agencies, and allied VFW posts, Post TH02 solidified its standing as an indispensable, award-winning sanctuary of service for veterans across Thailand's Eastern Seaboard.

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Conclusion



*1st Post to Meet Department Goal
(Runner Up)*

Awarded To

Sgt. Thomas Oliver Ahlberg Post TH02

For the Year

2023-2024

*In recognition and sincere appreciation of outstanding service
and assistance which contributed to the advancement of
The American Legion programs and activities dedicated to
God and Country.*

Presented By Commander Robert L. Gray

Department of France

This 15th day of June 2024

Attest:

John D. Fleming
Department Adjutant

Robert L. Gray
Department Commander



100% Membership Chairman
Silver

Awarded To

Michael Chitwood, TH02

For the Year

2023-2024

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Department of France

This 15th day of June 2024

Attest:

John D. Fleming
Department Adjutant

Robert L. Gray
Department Commander



Certificate of Appreciation

This certificate of appreciation is gratefully presented to

**SGT Thomas Oliver Ahlberg Memorial Post TH02
100% Membership Goal 2023-2024**

*In recognition and sincere appreciation of outstanding service
and assistance which contributed to the advancement of
The American Legion programs and activities dedicated to
God and Country.*

Presented by Commander Robert L. Gray

Department of France

This 14th Day of June 2024

Attest:

John D. Fleming
Department Adjutant

Robert L. Gray
Department Commander



Certificate Of Meritorious Service

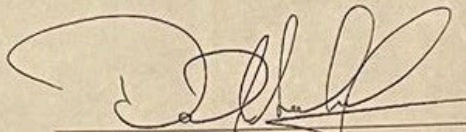
For Faithfulness In The Performance Of Duties, And Meriting Special Confidence And Esteem Because Of Manifested Cooperation And Loyalty. Recognition Is Hereby Accorded For Meritorious Service Rendered As Hereinafter Set Forth, And Presented To

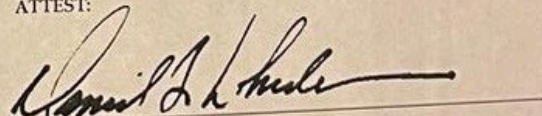
Sgt. Thomas Oliver Ahlberg Memorial Post TH02
Department of France
The American Legion

Who Has Rendered Meritorious Service By Enrolling For The Year 2024, A Membership Equaling Or Surpassing Its Previous All-time High. This Enrollment Was Accomplished By December 31 Preceding The Beginning Of The Calendar Year Indicated.

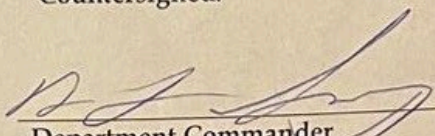
In Witness Whereof, This Certificate Is Given To Said Post, Under The Hand Of The National Commander, And Duly Attested By The National Adjutant, At Indianapolis, Indiana, This 26th day of January, 2024, And Countersigned By The Commander And The Adjutant For The Department.

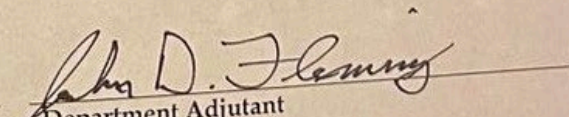
ATTEST:


National Commander


National Adjutant

Countersigned:


Department Commander


Department Adjutant



Small Post Over the Top
(Runner Up)

Awarded To

Sgt. Thomas Oliver Ahlberg Post TH02

For the Year

2023-2024

*In recognition and sincere appreciation of outstanding service
and assistance which contributed to the advancement of
The American Legion programs and activities dedicated to
God and Country.*

Presented By Commander Robert L. Gray

Department of France

This 15th day of June 2024

Attest:

John D. Fleming
Department Adjutant

Robert L. Gray
Department Commander