

History of American Legion Post TH-02

Sergeant Thomas Oliver Ahlberg Memorial Post No. TH02

Pattaya City, Chon Buri, Kingdom of Thailand
Calendar Year 2023



Introduction

Following its foundational period and subsequent institutional stabilization, the Sergeant Thomas Oliver Ahlberg Memorial Post No. TH02 entered 2023 focused on structural adaptation, extensive local welfare initiatives, and historic milestones in recruitment. Operating under the overseas jurisdiction of the Department of France, the Post substantially expanded its humanitarian reach through the creation of a dedicated veteran safety net while navigating strategic property redevelopments within the Pattaya veteran enclave.

1. Post Identity & Regional Alignment

Throughout 2023, Post TH02 aggressively expanded its localized framework to bridge service gaps and fortify its presence on Thailand's Eastern Seaboard.

- **Allied Inter-Post Relations:** The Post maintained a highly collaborative operational footprint alongside neighboring veteran units, partnering with VFW Post 9876 and VFW Post 12146 for joint events and mutual organizational milestones.
- **Diplomatic Engagement:** Direct coordination with the U.S. Embassy in Bangkok was significantly elevated. On November 3, 2023, the American Citizen Services (ACS) conducted its inaugural face-to-face outreach session in Pattaya since the pandemic era, with Post TH02 hosting a dedicated operational table to directly counsel the local expatriate veteran community.
- **International Coalitions:** Post leaders continued to reinforce multinational veterans' ties, marching alongside the French Foreign Soldiers League on June 6, 2023, to mark the D-Day Anniversary while carrying the American, American Legion, and Post colors. On August 26, 2023, Post officers represented the organization alongside the Dutch Ambassador and the U.S. JUSTMAG Commander at a regional VJ Day wreath-laying ceremony.
- **Military Liaison Logistics:** Comradeship with active deployments was highlighted on August 21, 2023, when members of TH02 and local VFW units participated in an allied ship tour hosted by the crew of the *USNS Brunswick* at the Sattahip Naval Base.

2. Executive Leadership & Officer Rotations

The administrative landscape of 2023 saw critical structural updates to the post by-laws, which were formally voted on and approved by the general membership on March 25, 2023. The year was defined by several key appointments to fill operational vacancies and a targeted restructuring of community relations:

- **January 27:** A full complement of officers was established, formally installing Skip Storno as 1st Vice Commander, Scott T. South as 2nd Vice Commander, and Shane Curtis as Chaplain/Judge Advocate.
- **May 27:** Following an official vacancy, Jim Davidson was appointed Post Chaplain. Concurrently, Commander William Ahlberg split the over-encumbered Post Community Relations desk into three distinct geographical and cultural regions: Chunhakarn Wonthumma (Thai Liaison), Guy Herron (South Korea Post Representative), and Mike Brewer (Local Pattaya Representative).
- **October 4:** Gary Mellor was formally installed into a dual role as 2nd Vice Commander and Post Service Officer, focusing his mandate heavily on securing critical support paths for the widows and spouses of local veterans.
- **November 25:** Media and diplomatic networks were enhanced via the designation of Thomas South as Digital Content Creator (DCC) and the formal appointment of member Mike Brewer as an official Community Support Liaison by the U.S. Embassy.

2023 Officer Roster (As updated throughout the year)

Position	Jan – May 2023 DOCX	May – Oct 2023 DOCX	Oct – Dec 2023 DOCX
Post Commander	William M. Ahlberg	William M. Ahlberg	William M. Ahlberg
1st Vice Commander	Skip Storno	Skip Storno	Skip Storno
2nd Vice Commander	Scott T. South	Scott T. South	Gary Mellor
Adjutant / Finance Off.	Michael Chitwood	Michael Chitwood	Michael Chitwood
Judge Advocate	Shane Curtis	Shane Curtis	Shane Curtis
Post Service Officer	—	—	Gary Mellor
Chaplain	Shane Curtis	Jim Davidson	Jim Davidson
Thai Liaison	—	Chunhakarn Wonthumma	Chunhakarn Wonthumma

3. Financial Milestones & Post Home Relocation

The financial and asset management strategies of 2023 were governed by a major structural transition regarding the physical Post Home.

- **Merchandise & Asset Upgrades:** On September 23, 2023, a floor motion initially authorized an expenditure of up to 70,000 Baht to update interior seating with 15 new chairs and procure branded apparel. This budget line was refined on October 28, 2023, when the general membership passed a clean motion enacting a strict spending ceiling of 50,000 Baht for the post shirt inventory.
- **The Relocation Crisis & Settlement:** Confronting an impending rent increase, a long-term solution emerged on October 28, 2023, when the landlady offered a newly remodeled neighboring property featuring detached bungalows. This option allowed the post to sublet the extra units, effectively dropping the net monthly rent liability to a sustainable 10,000 Baht.
- **Lease Execution:** On November 25, 2023, the general membership passed a definitive floor motion authorizing post officers to officially execute the new lease and initiate relocation.
- **The Post Home Fund:** To directly offset capital expenses generated by the physical move—including infrastructure costs for air conditioning units, internet lines, meeting tables, and landscaping—Commander Ahlberg formally established a dedicated **Post Home Fund** on December 23, 2023.
- **The Historic Transition:** The post held its final general assembly at the original facility on December 23, 2023. Commander Ahlberg brought the operational year to a close with the historic transition phrase: "*Same time, Different place.*"

4. The Nathan Kent Foundation & Veteran Repatriation

The defining institutional development of 2023 was the formal creation and execution of a legal framework tasked with preventing indigent American veterans from being buried in unmarked pauper's graves.

- **Foundation Inception:** On January 27, 2023, the post officially instituted the **Nathan Kent Fund** as an emergency safety net of last resort, catalyzed by the immediate need to assist the families of two U.S. veterans who had passed away completely isolated in Pattaya.
- **SOP Standardization:** On March 25, 2023, formal Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) governing the foundation were officially adopted following a legal review by the Department of France Judge Advocate.
- **Exhumation Logistics:** On March 25, 2023, Thai Community Liaison Chunhakarn Wongthumma successfully navigated complex local regulations to exhume the remains of U.S. Army Veteran John Pryor from a Chinese pauper's grave in Naklua to facilitate proper cremation.
- **Repatriation Execution:** Service Officer records from April 22, 2023, confirmed that the remains of veterans John Pryor and Anthony Francois were successfully prepared and put in transit to American Legion posts in Ohio and Oregon, respectively. On May 16, 2023, the mission was finalized when Vietnam Veteran Anthony Francois was interred with full military honors at the Willamette Memorial Cemetery in Oregon.
- **Institutional Funding:** On July 22, 2023, the foundation received a major \$1,000 financial injection routed through Navy Federal Credit Union (NFCU) channels from a donor identified as Francois.

5. Community Outreach & Institutional Initiatives

- **Four Chaplains Ceremony:** On February 25, 2023, the post conducted a formal memorial ceremony honoring the historic WWII sacrifice of the four Army chaplains aboard the SS *Dorchester*.
- **Acute PTSD Emergency Intervention:** On February 25, 2023, Post leadership and U.S. Embassy Liaison Bobby Brooks coordinated an immediate rescue intervention for homeless U.S. Marine Veteran Chinadum Timothy Alozie, successfully securing medical hospitalization to safely stabilize him for emergency return transit to the United States.
- **Children's Holiday Charity:** Demonstrating deep community goodwill, the post organized and fully funded a holiday charity event on November 25, 2023, hosting 17 children and 3 supervisors from the *"Take Care of Kids Thailand Foundation"* for a special day at Trattoria Pizzeria Toscana.

6. Financial Condition and Membership Growth

Despite the administrative and logistical challenges of preparing a physical relocation, recruitment and retention metrics broke all historical post records.

- **Departmental Recognition:** During the Department of France Convention held in Germany from June 16–17, 2023, Post TH02 was formally awarded four distinct honors for its highly successful membership campaigns:
 - *1st Post to Meet the Department Goal (Runner-up)*
 - *100% Post Membership Chairman*
 - *Post Target Date Award*
 - *Small Post Over the Top (Runner-up)*
 -
- **The Century Mark:** On October 28, 2023, Post TH02 completely shattered its previous recruitment boundaries, achieving a historic high of **102 active members** in good standing.

6. Taps, Memorial Tributes, and Post Everlasting

The solemn execution of final tributes remained a pillar of the post's weekly duties throughout 2023 as multiple members were transferred to Post Everlasting.

- **Owen Stuart Anderson (USCG Ret.):** Following his passing, the final wishes of U.S. Coast Guard Senior Chief Anderson were fulfilled on August 28, 2023, via a formal Burial at Sea and an Eight Bell Ceremony executed off the Oregon coast. On October 28, 2023, the Sergeant at Arms formally draped the post charter in his memory.
- **Bruce E. Cronheim (USAF):** On November 4, 2023, Charter Member and Air Force Veteran Bruce E. Cronheim passed away while visiting family in the United States. The post charter was draped a second time on November 25, 2023, to honor his dual legacy as a joint brother of both TH02 and VFW Post 9876.
- **Edwin Garnard Pickens (USAF Ret.):** On December 21, 2023, formal military honors were rendered for TH02/VFW Charter Member Edwin Garnard Pickens during his final inurnment at the Clark Veterans Cemetery in the Philippines, with VFW Post 2485 Honor Guard and VFW Surgeon Lou Holub conducting the protocols.

In Memoriam Charter Post Member



Conclusion

Calendar Year 2023 stands as a monumental era of growth, humanitarian infrastructure, and transition for American Legion Post TH02. Confronting the harsh realities facing aging expatriate veterans, the post moved past mere self-preservation by establishing the permanent legal mechanics of the Nathan Kent Foundation, ensuring final dignity for fallen comrades. Culminating in an all-time high of 102 active members and executing a strategic relocation to a sustainable new Post Home, TH02 closed the year positioned as a premier vanguard of veteran care on the international stage.

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