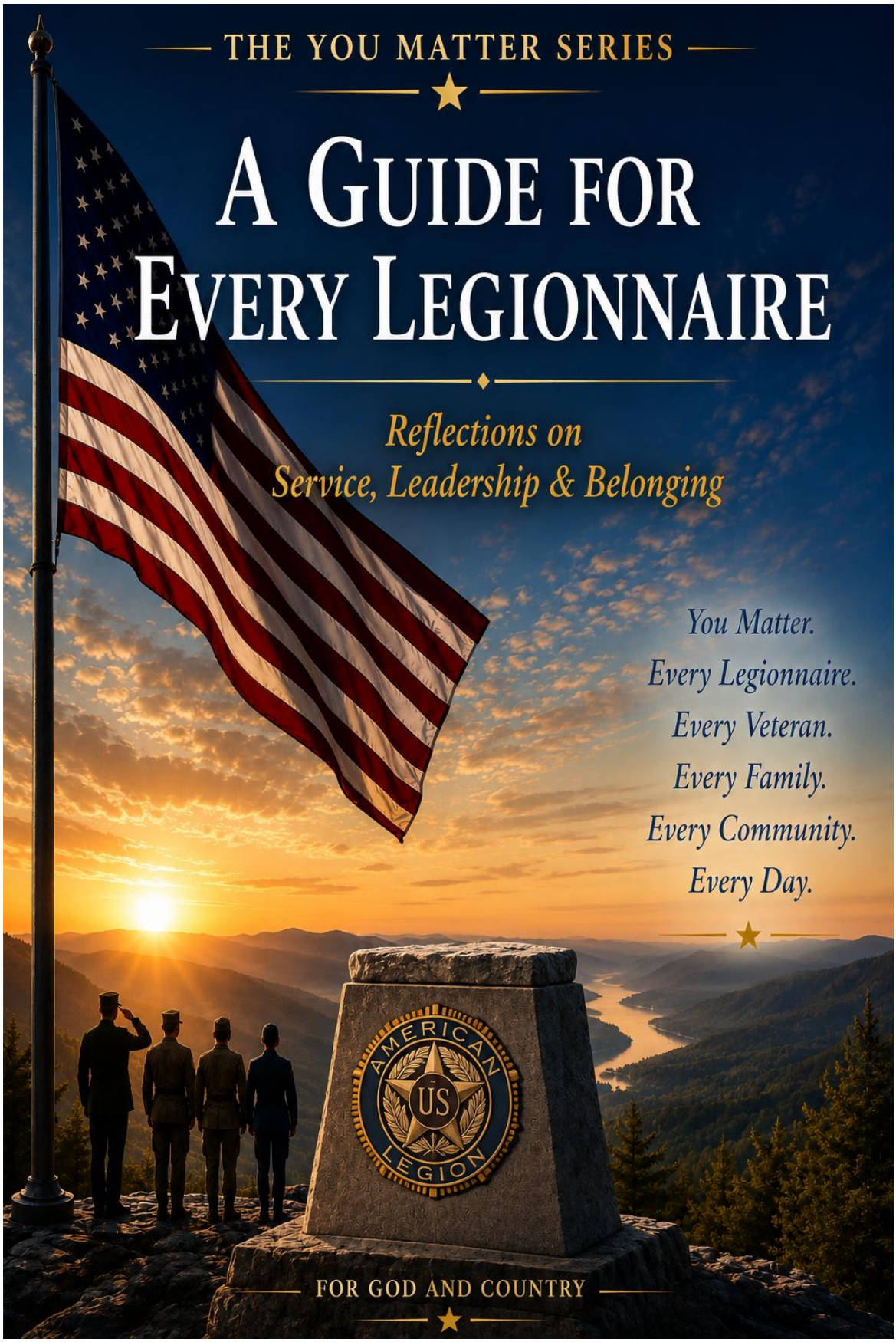

THE YOU MATTER SERIES
A GUIDE FOR EVERY LEGIONNAIRE
Reflections on Service, Leadership & Belonging
You Matter.
Every Legionnaire.
Every Veteran.
Every Family.
Every Community.
Every Day.
AMERICAN LEGION
US
FOR GOD AND COUNTRY

THE YOU MATTER SERIES

A Guide for Every Legionnaire

Reflections on
Service, Leadership & Belonging

You Matter.
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Every Legionnaire.
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Every Day.

FOR GOD AND COUNTRY

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to the Legionnaires who quietly serve without seeking recognition.

To those who welcome a new veteran with a handshake.

To those who arrive early, stay late, and simply do what needs to be done.

To the mentors who encourage future leaders.

To the families whose support makes continued service possible.

To every Legionnaire who has chosen to leave The American Legion stronger than they found it.

Your names may never appear in history books.

Yet your influence is written into the lives you have touched.

This book is offered in grateful appreciation for your service.

For God and Country.

This book is offered in the spirit of service to every Legionnaire.

May it be shared, discussed, and used to encourage others to live the principles of the Preamble of The American Legion.

For God and Country.

You MATTER.

EVERY LEGIONNAIRE.
EVERY VETERAN.
EVERY FAMILY.
EVERY COMMUNITY.
EVERY DAY.

VOICES ACROSS GENERATIONS

HONORING OUR PAST.
INSPIRING OUR PRESENT.
SHAPING OUR FUTURE.

THE PREAMBLE

TO THE CONSTITUTION OF

THE AMERICAN LEGION

For God and Country, we associate ourselves together for the following purposes: To uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States of America; to maintain law and order; to foster and perpetuate a one hundred percent Americanism; to preserve the memories and incidents of our associations in the Great Wars; to inculcate a sense of individual obligation to the community, state and nation; to combat the autocracy of both the classes and the masses; to make right the master of might; to promote peace and good will on earth; to safeguard and transmit to posterity the principles of justice, freedom and democracy; to consecrate and sanctify our comradeship by our devotion to mutual helpfulness.

AMERICAN LEGION

AMERICAN LEGION

SERVICE. COMMITMENT. PURPOSE. COMMUNITY.

VETERANS FAMILIES COMMUNITIES NATION

An Invitation to the Journey

For more than a century, the Preamble to the Constitution of The American Legion has reminded Legionnaires why our organization exists. It is more than a statement of purpose. It is a reflection of the values that have guided generations of veterans in continued service to one another, to their communities, and to our nation.

Each generation of Legionnaires has faced different challenges, yet the principles of the Preamble have remained constant. They remind us that our mission is larger than ourselves, that service is a lifelong calling, and that our greatest strength has always been found in mutual helpfulness.

This book is an invitation to reflect on those principles through the experiences of Legionnaires. It is not intended to replace the wisdom of those who came before us, but to encourage today's Legionnaires to continue living those ideals in ways that strengthen our posts, support our fellow veterans, and prepare the next generation of leaders.

As you read these pages, remember one simple truth:

The American Legion has never been defined solely by its programs, buildings, or traditions.

It has always been defined by Legionnaires.

You are now part of that continuing story.

Welcome to your journey.

How to Use This Book

This book was written to encourage, inspire, and equip Legionnaires at every level of The American Legion. Whether you are a new member, a longtime Legionnaire, or an elected leader, these pages are intended to remind you that every Legionnaire has the ability to strengthen our organization through everyday acts of service, leadership, and encouragement.

The chapters are intentionally brief. Most can be read in just a few minutes, making them easy to revisit throughout the year. Rather than reading the entire book at once, consider reading one chapter before a post meeting, during a quiet morning with a cup of coffee, or whenever you need encouragement and perspective.

You may also find value in discussing a chapter with fellow Legionnaires, using one as the basis for a leadership discussion, or sharing a favorite passage during a meeting or training session. The purpose of this book is not simply to be read, but to encourage conversations that strengthen our posts, our communities, and our commitment to one another.

As you journey through these pages, remember that leadership is not reserved for a select few. Every Legionnaire influences the future of The American Legion through the example they set, the people they encourage, and the service they provide.

Read thoughtfully.

Reflect honestly.

Serve faithfully.

And never forget...

You Matter.

Chapter 1

You Matter

Voices Across Generations

From Our American Legion Heritage

"Some of us experienced for the first time the great satisfaction arising out of unselfish service to our country at a time when the need was great and pressing…"

Franklin D'Olier
First National Commander (1919–1920)

Historical Source: First public address as National Commander, Washington, D.C., December 12, 1919.

From the *You Matter Reflections*

"Every Legionnaire matters because every Legionnaire continues a tradition of service that began long before us and will continue long after us."

For more than a century, The American Legion has united veterans who believe that military service does not end when the uniform comes off. It continues through our service to veterans, our families, our communities, and our nation. Every generation has faced different challenges, but every generation has shared the same opportunity—to continue serving with purpose.

More Than a Member

Every Legionnaire is a member of The American Legion, but being a Legionnaire means far more than holding a membership card. It reflects honorable military service, responsible citizenship, and a commitment to serve others long after military service has ended. We come from different generations, branches of

service, and backgrounds, yet we are united by a common purpose: to leave The American Legion stronger than we found it.

Most Legionnaires will never serve as National Commander, Department Commander, or Post Commander. Many will never hold elected office. Yet the strength of our organization has never depended on titles. It has always depended on ordinary Legionnaires who choose to do extraordinary good—welcoming a new veteran, mentoring a future leader, comforting a grieving family, serving their community, or simply extending a hand of friendship. Quiet acts of service like these have sustained The American Legion since 1919.

Every Legionnaire inherits a legacy built by those who came before us. We are not merely beneficiaries of their work—we are its stewards. The decisions we make today, the example we set, and the people we encourage will shape the experience of the Legionnaires who follow us tomorrow.

This Is Why Every Legionnaire Matters

Every post develops a culture. The question is whether that culture inspires people to belong. New Legionnaires quickly discover whether they have entered a place where they are welcomed, respected, and invited to contribute. That culture is not created by policies or bylaws. It is created by Legionnaires. Every conversation, every handshake, every act of encouragement, and every example of servant leadership shapes someone else's experience.

History reminds us that meaningful change rarely begins with a committee or a campaign. More often, it begins with one Legionnaire who chooses to care, one conversation that offers encouragement, or one invitation that changes another veteran's life. Every Legionnaire has that opportunity. Every Legionnaire has that influence.

This is why you matter.

You matter because another veteran may find hope through your encouragement. You matter because a family may experience compassion through your service. You matter because someone may discover a place to belong simply because you took the time to say, *"We're glad you're here."* Most importantly, you matter because the future of The American Legion has always been entrusted to ordinary Legionnaires who faithfully continue the mission they inherited.

As you read the chapters that follow, remember that leadership does not begin with a title. It begins with identity. Before we can strengthen our posts, inspire others, mentor future leaders, or build thriving communities, we must first understand who we are.

We are Legionnaires.

Everything else begins there.

When we understand who we are, the next question naturally follows...

How do we continue serving?

Chapter 2

The Journey Continues

Voices Across Generations

From Our American Legion Heritage

"Now as civilians once more it is our purpose to continue to serve our country as citizens in the same spirit that inspired us under arms."

Franklin D'Olier
First National Commander (1919–1920)

Historical Source: First public address as National Commander, Washington, D.C., December 12, 1919.

From the *You Matter Reflections*

"The uniform may be folded away, but the opportunity to serve remains. The journey of a Legionnaire is not measured by where military service ended, but by where continued service begins."

Military service changes us. It teaches discipline, sacrifice, teamwork, and the importance of placing something greater than ourselves first. Although our time in uniform eventually comes to an end, those lessons remain with us for the rest of our lives. The American Legion was founded on the belief that veterans still have an important role to play—not as soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines, Guardians, or Coast Guardsmen, but as citizens who continue serving their communities and one another.

For more than a century, Legionnaires have answered that call in countless ways. Some mentor young veterans as they transition to civilian life. Others serve in Honor Guards, visit hospitalized veterans, support youth programs, advocate for veterans' benefits, or strengthen their local communities through volunteer service.

Every act, whether large or small, reflects the same spirit of service that first brought us together.

Continued service does not require holding office or leading a major project. It begins with a willingness to ask a simple question:

"Where am I needed today?"

For one Legionnaire, the answer may be making a phone call to a fellow veteran. For another, it may be welcoming a first-time visitor at a post meeting or encouraging someone to become involved. Every act of service strengthens not only another person but also the culture of The American Legion itself.

Service is not measured by recognition. Some of the most influential Legionnaires are those whose names rarely appear in newsletters or award presentations. They quietly show up, faithfully serve, and leave every person and every post a little stronger than they found them. Their example reminds us that leadership is not defined by position—it is revealed through consistent service.

The journey that began with military service did not end when we returned home.

It simply found a new mission.

When we continue serving with purpose, we naturally begin helping others discover that they belong.

And every journey begins with an invitation.

Chapter 3

Creating a Place Where Veterans Belong

Voices Across Generations

From Our American Legion Heritage

"Legion meeting tonight. Be there."

Those five simple words, spoken by a fellow ironworker, led Navy veteran Daniel A. Ludwig to attend his first American Legion meeting. That invitation began a lifetime of service that eventually led him to become National Commander of The American Legion.

Daniel A. Ludwig
National Commander (1995–1996)

Historical Source: *Past National Commander Perspectives* interview recalling the invitation that led to his first American Legion meeting.

From the *You Matter Reflections*

"Every Legionnaire remembers someone who made them feel they belonged. The future of The American Legion will be shaped by Legionnaires who choose to become that person for someone else."

Every Legionnaire has a first meeting. Some remember the agenda or the business that was conducted. Most remember something much simpler—how they were treated. A smile, a handshake, an introduction, or an invitation to return often leaves a deeper impression than anything discussed during the meeting itself.

Belonging does not begin when someone pays dues. It begins when someone feels seen, welcomed, and valued. Long before a veteran volunteers for a committee or accepts a leadership position, they decide whether this feels like a place where they can contribute. That decision is often shaped by a single conversation with a Legionnaire who cared enough to reach out.

Creating that kind of culture does not require elaborate programs. It requires intentional people. Every Legionnaire has the ability to greet someone they have never met, introduce them to others, invite them to participate, or simply make sure they are not standing alone. Those small acts communicate a powerful message:

"You belong here."

The strongest posts are not necessarily the largest posts. They are the posts where people know they matter. They are places where new Legionnaires become friends, where experienced Legionnaires become mentors, and where service becomes something shared rather than something assigned. When people feel that they belong, participation becomes natural and leadership develops almost effortlessly.

Daniel Ludwig's story reminds us that one invitation can change a life. None of us knows what influence a simple welcome may have on another veteran. The Legionnaire we greet today may become tomorrow's Post Commander, Department Commander, National Commander—or they may simply become a lifelong friend whose quiet service strengthens the lives of countless others. Every invitation carries possibilities we cannot yet see.

Creating a place where veterans belong begins with one decision.

Choose to be the Legionnaire who welcomes the next Legionnaire.

When people know they belong, they naturally begin serving something larger than themselves.

Together, we build a culture worth preserving.

Chapter 4

Leave It Better Than You Found It

Voices Across Generations

From Our American Legion Heritage

"My word is simply this. We came here to work. Let us keep working and not listen to speeches. I thank you."

Franklin D'Olier
First National Commander (1919–1920)

Historical Source: Acceptance remarks following his election as the first National Commander at the First National Convention, Minneapolis, Minnesota, November 1919.

From the *You Matter Reflections*

"Stewardship is measured not by what we inherit, but by what we choose to leave behind."

Every Legionnaire inherits something precious. We inherit an organization built by veterans who believed that serving America did not end when they returned home. They invested their time, their talents, and often their own resources so that future generations of veterans would have a place to belong, to serve, and to lead.

That inheritance carries a responsibility.

Whether we have been Legionnaires for forty years or four weeks, each of us has the opportunity to leave our post a little stronger than we found it. Sometimes that means mentoring a new Legionnaire. Sometimes it means preserving a tradition that still has value. Other times it means embracing a new idea that will help the next generation succeed. Stewardship is not about resisting change or pursuing change for its own sake. It is about wisely preparing tomorrow's Legion for tomorrow's veterans.

The strongest posts are not those that simply remember their history. They are the posts that continue writing it. Every successful membership drive, every community program, every scholarship awarded, every veteran assisted, and every young leader encouraged becomes part of the legacy we leave behind. Long after we are gone, others will benefit from the decisions we make today.

One day, another Legionnaire will inherit the organization we helped shape. They may never know our names, but they will experience the culture we created, the leaders we developed, and the example we set. That is the quiet influence of stewardship.

Leave every meeting better than you found it.

Leave every post better than you found it.

Leave every Legionnaire encouraged.

In doing so, you will leave The American Legion stronger than you found it.

The greatest legacy we leave is not found in what we accomplish alone, but in what others are inspired to accomplish after us.

Stewardship prepares the way for leadership.

Chapter 5

Every Legionnaire Is a Leader

Voices Across Generations

From Our American Legion Heritage

"As a leader you have to be honest. You have to be confident. You have to be inspirational. You have to be visionary … you have to see the future and have a vision of what that future is."

David K. Rehbein
National Commander (2008–2009)

Historical Source: Remarks to the National Legion College Class of 2019 on leadership.

From the *You Matter Reflections*

"Leadership is not the privilege of the few. It is the daily responsibility of every Legionnaire whose example encourages someone else to serve."

Leadership is often associated with titles, elections, and positions of authority. While those responsibilities are important, they are not where leadership begins. In The American Legion, leadership begins the moment a Legionnaire chooses to influence others through character, service, and example.

Some of the most respected Legionnaires never serve as Post Commander or Department Officer. They are the people who quietly arrive early to prepare for meetings, stay afterward to help clean up, welcome new veterans, encourage struggling members, and willingly accept responsibility whenever something needs to be done. Their influence is not found in their title, but in the trust they earn through faithful service.

True leadership is contagious. A Legionnaire who serves with humility encourages others to do the same. A Legionnaire who remains positive during difficult times

strengthens the entire post. A Legionnaire who believes in another person's potential often inspires that person to become tomorrow's leader. Every act of leadership, no matter how small it may seem, helps shape the future of The American Legion.

Leadership also requires courage. Sometimes that means embracing change. Sometimes it means preserving traditions that continue to unite us. Often it means listening before speaking and encouraging before criticizing. The best leaders understand that people are always more important than personal recognition.

Every Legionnaire leads someone.

The question is not whether we have influence.

The question is how we choose to use it.

Leadership is never about standing above others.

It is about walking beside them.

Chapter 6

Growing the Next Generation

Voices Across Generations

From Our American Legion Heritage

"The teaching, training, education, mentoring that we do for America's young folks are developing the future leaders of this country... We are deciding where the future of this organization is going. We are part of the future."

James W. "Bill" Oxford
National Commander (2019–2020)

Historical Source: Remarks to the National Legion College Class of 2019 on mentorship and developing future leaders.

From the *You Matter Reflections*

"A Legionnaire's greatest legacy is not the position they held, but the person they encouraged to lead after them."

Every Legionnaire can remember someone who offered guidance at the right moment. Sometimes it was a commander. Sometimes it was a mentor. Often it was simply a Legionnaire who took the time to answer questions, offer encouragement, or quietly say, "You can do this."

That is how leadership grows.

Mentorship does not require a formal program. It begins with a conversation, an invitation to help with a project, or the confidence to let someone try something new. Every time we encourage another Legionnaire, we strengthen not only that individual but also the future of our post.

The strongest leaders are not those who do everything themselves. They are the ones who develop others to carry the mission forward. They understand that

sharing responsibility is not giving something away—it is multiplying the organization's ability to serve veterans, families, and communities.

Every experienced Legionnaire has knowledge worth sharing. Every new Legionnaire has potential waiting to be developed. When those two come together, experience becomes wisdom, enthusiasm becomes confidence, and today's new Legionnaire becomes tomorrow's leader.

Mentorship is not about creating someone who leads exactly as we do. It is about helping another Legionnaire discover their own strengths while remaining faithful to the values that unite us.

The future of The American Legion is shaped one relationship at a time.

Invest in one Legionnaire.

The future will take care of itself.

The leaders we remember are often the ones who first believed in us.

Tomorrow's leadership begins with today's encouragement.

Chapter 7

Every Conversation Matters

Voices Across Generations

From Our American Legion Heritage

"It isn't necessary or desirable that we all think alike. It is essential that we espouse our differences reasonably with good will and due regard for other opinions. Honest disagreement honorably expressed cannot divide Americans."

Daniel F. Foley
National Commander (1963–1964)

Historical Source: *"The Doctrine of Commonsense,"* message by National Commander Daniel F. Foley (1964), reproduced by *The American Legion*.

From the *You Matter Reflections*

"The words we choose today become the culture we live tomorrow."

Every Legionnaire communicates every time they walk through the post door. Sometimes communication takes the form of a speech or a report, but more often it is found in everyday conversations. A greeting offered with sincerity, a word of encouragement, a respectful disagreement, or a simple "thank you" often leaves a greater impression than the most carefully prepared presentation.

Communication is more than exchanging information. It is how trust is built. People are more willing to serve, volunteer, and lead when they know they are heard and respected. Even difficult conversations become opportunities to strengthen relationships when they are guided by patience, humility, and a genuine desire to understand one another.

Every Legionnaire helps shape the tone of a post. Optimism encourages participation. Respect builds confidence. Listening demonstrates that every voice has value. When we choose our words carefully, we create an environment where

people are comfortable sharing ideas, asking questions, and working together to accomplish the mission.

Not every conversation will be easy. Honest people will sometimes disagree. Healthy organizations are not defined by the absence of disagreement, but by the way they treat one another during it. The American Legion has always been strongest when Legionnaires remember that mutual respect is more important than winning an argument.

Every conversation leaves something behind.

Leave behind encouragement.

Leave behind understanding.

Leave behind hope.

The conversations we have today become the culture we leave tomorrow.

Choose words that strengthen both people and purpose.

Chapter 8

Building a Culture Worth Joining

Voices Across Generations

From Our American Legion Heritage

"I can't do it alone. I need everybody here on my team, helping us reach our goals and objectives. We are all stakeholders in this organization. We are the future of this organization."

James W. "Bill" Oxford
National Commander (2019–2020)

Historical Source: Acceptance remarks following his election as National Commander at the 101st National Convention, Indianapolis, Indiana, August 29, 2019.

From the *You Matter Reflections*

"People may join because they are invited, but they remain because they find a culture worth belonging to."

Culture is not created by chance. It is shaped by the attitudes, habits, and daily actions of every Legionnaire. Every greeting, every meeting, every decision, and every act of service communicates what a post truly values. Over time, those individual moments become the culture that others experience.

Healthy post cultures are welcoming without losing their traditions. They honor the past while preparing for the future. They encourage new ideas without forgetting the principles that have guided The American Legion for more than a century. Most importantly, they help every Legionnaire believe that their presence and their contributions truly matter.

A positive culture does not mean every decision is easy or every opinion is the same. It means Legionnaires trust one another enough to work through differences

with respect and a shared commitment to the mission. When that happens, people are more willing to volunteer, accept responsibility, and invest in the future of the post.

Every Legionnaire helps shape that culture. The example we set today becomes the environment another veteran experiences tomorrow. When we intentionally create a place where people feel welcomed, respected, and encouraged to serve, we build more than a successful post—we build a lasting legacy.

Culture is not something we inherit.

It is something we create together.

The culture we build today becomes the invitation future veterans will experience.

Build a culture worthy of those who have yet to walk through the door.

Chapter 9

Every Legionnaire Is an Ambassador

Voices Across Generations

From Our American Legion Heritage

"That is what we do—that is who we are. We change lives each and every day. The American Legion Family is there making a difference—not just in the veteran's life but their entire family's lives."

Denise H. Rohan
National Commander (2017–2018)

Historical Source: Remarks to The American Legion National Membership Workshop, Indianapolis, Indiana, August 10, 2018.

From the *You Matter Reflections*

"The reputation of The American Legion is built one conversation, one act of kindness, and one Legionnaire at a time."

Every Legionnaire represents The American Legion whether serving at a post meeting, volunteering in the community, attending a civic event, or simply living their daily life. Long before people understand what we believe, they often decide what they think about our organization by watching how we treat others.

That responsibility is also a remarkable opportunity. Every act of kindness, every promise kept, every respectful conversation, and every example of integrity reflects positively on The American Legion. We may never know whose opinion has changed because of a single interaction, but positive impressions are built one person at a time.

Being an ambassador does not require a title or a special assignment. It simply requires remembering that our actions speak as clearly as our words. When Legionnaires demonstrate humility, compassion, professionalism, and respect, they

strengthen the public's confidence in an organization that has faithfully served America since 1919.

Communities remember organizations that consistently show up when they are needed. Whether supporting veterans, assisting local schools, honoring those who served, or participating in civic events, Legionnaires demonstrate that service remains at the heart of who we are. Those moments often become the strongest testimony to our mission.

Every Legionnaire wears the emblem of The American Legion differently.

Every Legionnaire carries its reputation.

Represent it well.

The strongest invitation we can offer is the example we live every day.

People may first notice our emblem, but they will remember our character.

Chapter 10

The Legacy We Leave

Voices Across Generations

From Our American Legion Heritage

"Offer them a place in your post because it will soon be their post. And be sure to mention that we're all just stewards of The American Legion, which built its rich history by always looking to the future."

Daniel M. Dellinger
National Commander (2013–2014)

Historical Source: "As Stewards of the Legion's Future," *The American Legion Magazine*, August 19, 2014.

From the *You Matter Reflections*

"Legacy is not measured by how long we served, but by how many people are stronger because we did."

Every Legionnaire leaves a legacy. The only question is what that legacy will be. For some, it may be a successful community program. For others, it may be a tradition preserved, a young leader encouraged, or a veteran who found hope because someone cared enough to help.

Legacy is rarely built through one extraordinary moment. More often, it is shaped by ordinary acts of service repeated faithfully over time. A welcoming spirit, a commitment to excellence, a willingness to mentor others, and a life marked by integrity leave an influence that continues long after meetings have ended and offices have changed hands.

The future of The American Legion depends upon Legionnaires who think beyond today. Strong leaders ask not only, "What needs to be done?" but also, "Who will

continue this work after me?" When we invest in people as faithfully as we invest in programs, our influence extends far beyond our own years of service.

Few of us will be remembered for the titles we held. We will be remembered for the lives we touched, the leaders we developed, and the example we set. Those are the things that become part of the living history of every post.

One day another Legionnaire will benefit from a decision you made, a tradition you preserved, or an encouraging word you shared.

That is your legacy.

Leave one worth inheriting.

The greatest gift we give the future is preparing others to serve it well.

A lasting legacy begins with today's faithful service.

Chapter 11

The Future Is in Good Hands

Voices Across Generations

From Our American Legion Heritage

“I’ve heard it said that people don’t care how much you know about them once they know how much you care about them.”

David K. Rehbein
National Commander (2008–2009)

Historical Source: Remarks to the National Legion College Class of 2019, Indianapolis, Indiana, November 2019.

From the *You Matter Reflections*

"The future is always in good hands when today's Legionnaires choose to invest in tomorrow's."

Every generation wonders what the future will bring. New challenges emerge, communities change, and the needs of veterans continue to evolve. Yet one truth has remained constant since 1919: whenever Legionnaires have chosen to serve with purpose, The American Legion has moved confidently into the future.

The future is not built by chance. It is shaped by the decisions we make today. Every veteran we welcome, every young leader we encourage, every tradition we preserve, and every new idea we embrace becomes part of tomorrow's American Legion. Hope is not simply wishing for a better future. It is working together to create one.

The next generation of Legionnaires will not lead exactly as previous generations did, nor should they. Every generation brings new experiences, new perspectives, and new opportunities to strengthen the organization. Our responsibility is not to

shape them into our image. It is to prepare them to faithfully carry forward the mission we all share.

The future of The American Legion is already taking shape in posts across America. It can be seen in Legionnaires who mentor, listen, encourage, and welcome others into service. Every investment we make in people today becomes a source of strength tomorrow.

The future is not something we wait to see.

It is something we choose to build.

Hope grows wherever Legionnaires choose to invest in the next generation.

The future is in good hands because today's Legionnaires are preparing tomorrow's leaders.

Chapter 12

The Story Continues

Voices Across Generations

From Our American Legion Heritage

"...to consecrate and sanctify our comradeship by our devotion to mutual helpfulness."

Historical Source: *Constitution of The American Legion, Preamble.*

From the *You Matter Reflections*

"Every Legionnaire inherits the story of The American Legion. Every Legionnaire has the opportunity—and the responsibility—to write its next chapter."

Every Legionnaire becomes part of a story that began long before they joined The American Legion. Others built the foundation we now enjoy through their service, sacrifice, and unwavering belief that veterans would always have another mission to fulfill. Because they served faithfully, we inherited an organization worthy of our commitment.

Now the story belongs to us.

Each conversation, each act of kindness, each veteran welcomed, and each community served becomes another page in the history of The American Legion. The future will not be shaped by one remarkable event, but by thousands of ordinary Legionnaires who continue choosing service over self, encouragement over criticism, and hope over discouragement.

One day, another Legionnaire will inherit the organization we leave behind. They may never know our names, but they will experience the culture we created, the

leaders we mentored, and the example we set. In that way, every Legionnaire helps write a chapter that someone else will continue.

This book ends where your journey begins.

Continue serving.

Continue encouraging.

Continue leading.

Continue welcoming.

Continue believing that one Legionnaire can make a difference.

Because history has already proven that to be true.

The story continues.

And so does your opportunity to help write it.

The next chapter in The American Legion's history is waiting.

Pick up the pen.

A Personal Commitment

Every Legionnaire writes a chapter in the continuing story of The American Legion.

When this book is closed, that story continues through each of us.

As a Legionnaire...

- I serve with honor, humility, and purpose.
- I welcome every veteran with dignity and respect.
- I lead by example, knowing that influence is earned through service.
- I encourage others and help develop the next generation of Legionnaires.
- I strengthen the culture of my post through kindness, integrity, and mutual respect.
- I represent The American Legion in a manner worthy of its history and values.
- I strive to leave every person, every post, and every community better than I found them.
- I remember that my legacy is not measured by what I receive, but by what I leave behind.

The story of The American Legion is still being written.

May my chapter be worthy of those who came before...

...and an inspiration to those who will follow.

Appendix

Voices Across Generations

Featured Historical Voices

The historical quotations appearing throughout this book are drawn from official speeches, publications, convention proceedings, and archival materials of The American Legion. The following sources provided the historical voices featured in each chapter.

Franklin D'Olier — *First National Commander (1919–1920)*
Quoted in Chapters 1, 2, and 4. Sources include his first public address as National Commander (December 12, 1919) and his acceptance remarks at the First National Convention (November 1919).

Daniel A. Ludwig — *National Commander (1995–1996)*
Quoted in Chapter 3. Source: *Past National Commander Perspectives* interview recalling the invitation that led to his first American Legion meeting.

David K. Rehbein — *National Commander (2008–2009)*
Quoted in Chapters 5 and 11. Source: Remarks to the National Legion College Class of 2019 on leadership and mentorship.

James W. "Bill" Oxford — *National Commander (2019–2020)*
Quoted in Chapters 6 and 8. Sources: Remarks to the National Legion College Class of 2019 and acceptance remarks at the 101st National Convention.

Daniel F. Foley — *National Commander (1963–1964)*
Quoted in Chapter 7. Source: *The Doctrine of Commonsense* (1964).

Denise H. Rohan — *National Commander (2017–2018)*
Quoted in Chapter 9. Source: Remarks to The American Legion National Membership Workshop, August 2018.

Daniel M. Dellinger — *National Commander (2013–2014)*
Quoted in Chapter 10. Source: *As Stewards of the Legion's Future*, *The American Legion Magazine* (2014).

The Preamble to the Constitution of The American Legion
Quoted in Chapter 12. Source: Constitution of The American Legion, Preamble.

For God and Country

May every Legionnaire know that they matter.