



HOME DPA HISTORY

Post 9723 History

(NAHA) Okinawa Memorial Post 9723



"Post 9723 History"

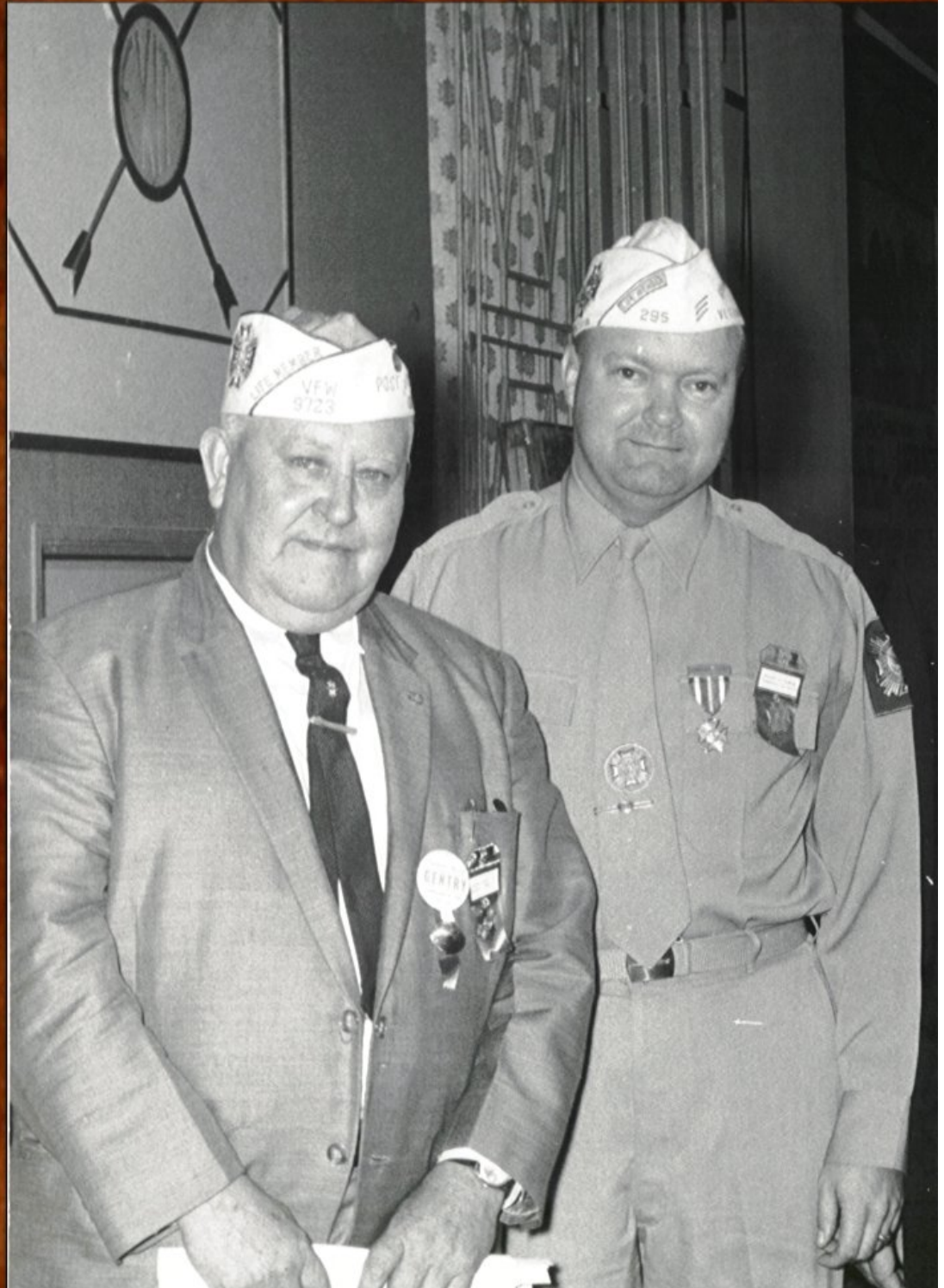
Chartered: 25 January 1948

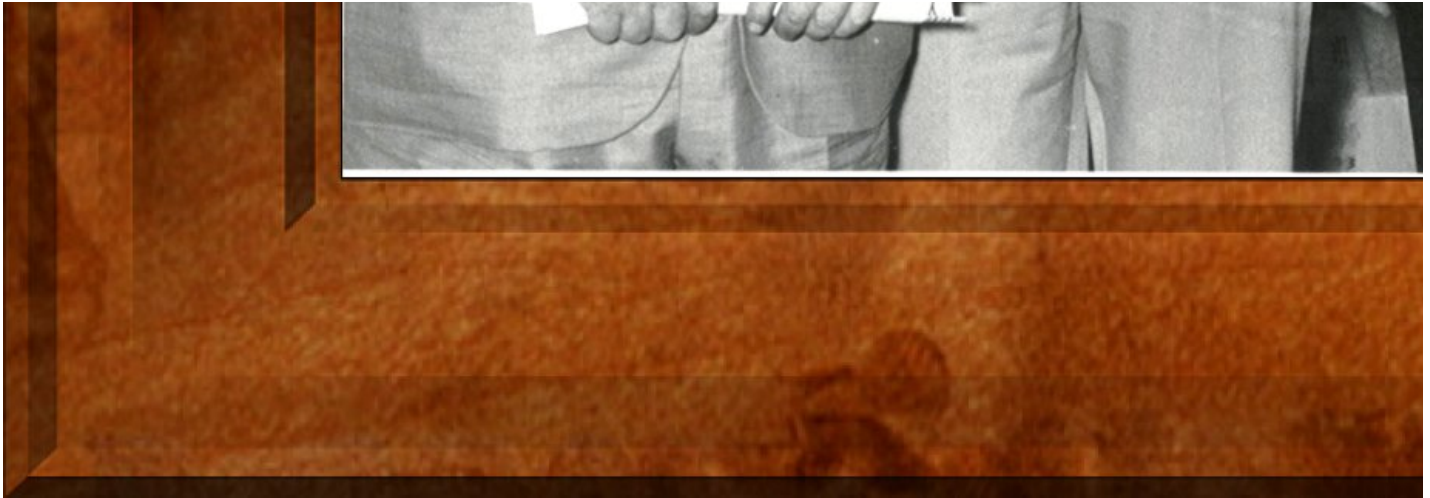
Original Location: Naha Okinawa

Commander-in-Chief: Ray H. Brannamen

SPECIAL NOTES:

At the height of the Vietnam War Okinawa Memorial Post 9723 was the largest VFW Post in the WORLD in membership, assets and property. (Quote from Letter from Lawrence P. LeBeau, Post Commander, Letter not dated.)





National Convention, Minneapolis, MINN. Aug 1962

Left to Right

Raymond Graves Past Post 9723 CDR, C-1-C Robert Hanson, William Langston Post 9723 CDR

Paul E. Newman Nat Deputy C/S FAREAST

History Behind the Post Name

Okinawa Memorial Post 9723 (chartered 25 January 1948)

Okinawa Memorial Post 9723 in Naha, Okinawa, is the third oldest Post in Pacific Areas. Because of Okinawa's close proximity to mainland Japan (only 300 nautical miles to Kyushu), Allied war planners in 1945 stressed the importance of occupying the island to obtain airfields and anchorages to support the planned November invasion of mainland Japan.

April 1, 1945, was set as L-Day (Landing Day), and early that morning an invasion force of 180,000 soldiers (the 7th, 96th, 77th, and 27th Army Divisions) and Marines (the 1st, 2nd, and 6th Marine Divisions) was poised aboard troopships protected by a massive fleet off Okinawa's coast. The main assault force of four divisions (the 1st and 6th Marine Divisions, and 7th and 96th Army Divisions) went ashore on the southwest coast, from Yontan to Wadena. Another Army division made a feint attack on the south shore, not far from Minatoga. Against even the most optimistic expectations, the landings went virtually unopposed. Of the 60,000 troops who went ashore, only 28 were killed.

The troops quickly moved inland, and three hours after the initial landings both Yontan and Kadena airfields were firmly in U.S. hands. The Marines moved north from there to cover the upper two-thirds of the island, and the Army moved south, where the principal Japanese line of defense was located. On L-plus-2 the Americans finished their sweep across the Ishikawa Isthmus and on L-plus-3 had secured a broad stretch of the east coast, cutting off the defenders in the north from those in the south. That set the stage for the Pacific War's final major battle.

No one could have predicted that the fighting would continue for nearly three months afterward, becoming "the bloodiest island fight of the Pacific War." The Japanese had to be literally blasted out of thousands of small holes and caves dug into Okinawa's rocky southern hills.

Offshore, the scene was just as vicious, with Navy ships confronting waves of swarming kamikaze planes in their suicidal kikusui ("floating chrysanthemum") attacks. While sacrificing over 1,800 planes, the Japanese sank 32 American ships and damaged another 386. The suicide planes instilled fear in even the staunchest heart at the specter of sudden holocaust created on board a ship by exploding bombs and gasoline. Because of the kamikaze planes, U.S. Navy casualties on Okinawa were the highest of any single campaign of the war.

The Japanese Combined Fleet of 10 ships, meanwhile, including the mighty 72,800-ton Yamato, the largest battleship ever built, the light cruiser Yahagi and eight destroyers, was sent to Okinawa on a separate suicide mission. They were expected to lure the U.S. carriers away from Okinawa, then to beach themselves on the island and die fighting the American forces. This never happened.

U.S. Army and Marine losses were 7,613 KIA and 31,807 WIA; Navy losses were 4,320 KIA and 7,312 WIA. Japanese losses were a staggering 110,000 killed, including thousands of civilians. The losses on Okinawa, especially the determination of the Japanese to fight to the end, forced war analysts to revise their loss estimates upward for the invasion of mainland Japan to a million lives.

Compiled by Tom Elliott

Post 2485

Yours in Comradeship,

Tom Elliott,

Yokohama Post 9467

If you have anything to add to the History of the Department of Pacific Areas, either to the Department, Districts or Posts, Please Email dpahist@vfwddeptpacific.org with the information in Document format.