



Legion helped build Loganville

The history of American Legion Post 233 began with many of the names that are memorialized through the annals of Loganville's early years — Sellers, O'Kelley, Still, Hodges, Garrett, Coker, Atha and others. All told there were 42 charter members when the Legion post was formed in Loganville on November 11, 1946. It was on that date the charter members met with organizers from Post 1 out of Atlanta. The Loganville residents offered inspiring speeches and received their marching orders that left many "anxious to go to work" as they were challenged to become "the biggest little post in Georgia," according to minutes from the first meeting.

And so it was born from that meeting at the then Loganville High School gymnasium that Post 233 was formally recognized to serve a town of 750 — close to the amount of dues-paying members the post has today.

The next step was naming the post — which was done by a committee that wanted to take "due care not to let the matter get into political influence and with respect to all the good people of this community." It was decided to name the post Barrett-Davis-Watson

after three Loganville residents who did not return from World War II.

While Guy Barrett Jr. was originally from Jersey, his parents eventually moved to the town and he graduated from Loganville High School in 1939. He enlisted in the Naval Air Corps in 1942 and eventually left the U.S. as a member of Squadron VF-26 on March 1, 1944. After eight months of fighting the Japanese in the Pacific, on Oct. 24, 1944, his plane took off but was in the air only a short time before it crashed into the water about 125 miles from Leyte Island in the Philippines. A search for him was made in vain.

Raymond Martin Davis Jr. was a native of Loganville and graduated from the local high school in 1942. More than a year later he enlisted in the U.S. Army and landed in southern Italy on July 1, 1944. Thirty days later he saw his first battle and served as a part of the 7th Infantry Division of the 7th Army during the invasion of southern France. He was killed on Feb. 3, 1945, and was buried in Epinal, France, though at the time the burial was said to be temporary until his remains could be returned home.

William Leamon Watson was born in Lawrenceville, started his schooling in Atlanta and then in Commerce before his family came to call Loganville home. He enlisted in the U.S. Army on Sept. 15, 1940, shortly after his graduation from high school. He sailed for England in September 1943 after having undergone intensive training in preparation for the D-Day invasion. He was part of the Third Armored Division, having fought in five campaigns — Normandy, northern France, the Rhineland, the Ardennes and in central Germany. On March 31, 1945, Maj. Gen. Maurice Rose asked for two volunteers to go with him in a jeep on a very dangerous mission into enemy territory. Leamon was one of the two volunteers who accompanied the general in a jeep and who was ultimately killed after the column of vehicles was attacked near Paderborn, Germany.

The Legion used classrooms at the high school and initially raised money by hosting Bingo games and dances. Meanwhile Post 233 members began a Boys and Girls State program, hosted Oratorical Contests, formed a junior baseball team as well as hosted a Boy Scout Troop and youth choir.

The first major project the members of Post 233 did for the community was help raise money for better lights for the two-story high school that once existed on Main Street. They raised \$1,610 for the effort and members helped install the new lights.

In the 1950s the Legion built a home on a lot donated early in the group's history from the gold star mothers of Barrett and Davis, who gave in memory of their sons, and Horace Cowan. Post members also during

that decade helped build a \$45,000 medical clinic and supported the city by donating a fire truck as well as a Ford tractor and made a cash donation of \$7,500 that was needed for the city's nascent sewer system. A lot of the Post 233 members at the time were farmers and had the tools and equipment to help the city dig the trenches and get the project started. And through a barbecue fundraiser and from members soliciting donations, the American Legion Post 233 played a major role in getting the new high school furnished with blinds, chemistry labs and office furniture.

Post 233 continued to play an important role in the growth of development of Loganville until they were slowed down on Jan. 1, 1977, when the building that housed the Legion burned and was reduced to nothing more than cinder blocks and ash. The building was valued at \$100,000 but there was only \$30,000 worth of insurance on the structure. The first meeting after the fire, a majority of the members voted not to rebuild due in large part to the age of most of the members. But Bobby Boss, who had been an officer of Post 233 since 1962, stepped in and came forward with plans to re-build. He took his own equipment and cleared the remnants of the old

building and, as many attest, swayed the membership with his own determination to re-build. While the Post was turned down by several banks, leaders were able to secure a loan totaling \$120,000 from the National Bank of Walton County and construction was complete in November 1977.

American Legion Post 233 continues to play an important role in the history that is being written today through its support of more than 60 programs in the Loganville community. L

— Compiled from records available at the Post



(At top) Picture of a meeting in the 1950s of American Legion Post 233. (Above) Bingo was one of the earliest fundraisers for the Legion as they tried to raise money for a building.