

‘Honored’ to Make History

Massachusetts Post members help create new Mayflower bell

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Members of VFW Post 1822 in Plymouth, Mass., were well represented during a Sept. 1 ceremony for a new ship’s bell for the *Mayflower II*.

Post members donated their personal military service medals and other items that were melted down and cast into the ship’s new bell. The bell was cast for a ship that was built almost seven decades ago.

Mayflower II is a replica of the original *Mayflower*, which transported English settlers to the so-called “New World.” The replica was built by the British during the 1950s and was given to the U.S. as a gift for its contributions during World War II.

The Plymouth Plantation, a non-profit organization that replicates the original Plymouth Colony of the 1600s, maintains the replica ship. The organization contacted Post 1822 Commander Denis Russell to see if he knew veterans who would contribute to the bell by donating metal.

“After a number of meetings and phone conversations, a plan for a Labor Day weekend event was put into place,” Russell said. “I asked our Post members to donate an artifact that would be melted down and become a permanent part of the new bell.”

Russell was among eight Post members who donated metal for the bell. Each were veterans of the Vietnam War and provided personal service medals and other military items for the making of the bell.

Russell also donated his father’s WWII-era honorable service lapel pin. Russell said his father was a part of the 1944 D-Day invasion of Normandy, France.

Russell said he was among the first to ring the bell at the ceremony. Like a true sailor, he rang the bell three times.

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“Each strike was for all active-duty men and women serving around the world, for all veterans who served with honor and distinction, as well as one for those who served our great country and are now departed,” Russell said. “Our Post was honored to have played such an important role in this celebration of history.”

Here are the members of Post 1822 (all Vietnam War veterans), who donated metal for the *Mayflower II*'s new bell:

- Denis M. Russell, Navy, donated his Navy brass belt buckle inscribed with his wife's name and his father's honorable service lapel pin.
- Michael Bartnowski, Air Force, donated his Vietnam Service Medal.
- Paul Jennings, Marine Corps (also served in Operation Desert Storm), donated his air crew wings.
- Edward Borkin, Army, donated his brass buckle that was with him in Vietnam.
- Ronald Flockton, Navy, donated his brass belt buckle.
- Robert Davidson, Navy, donated his Vietnam Service medal.
- John “Jack” Best, Navy, donated his chief petty officer lapel pin.
- Larry Glass, Army, donated his military memorial medal.

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