AMERICANISM, one of the American Legion's four pillars, guides our Post 501 as we strongly engage in support of our Veterans programs. There is always something new to add to what already has been brought forth for your review.

ONE PROJECT IN SUPPORT OF THE AMERICAN FLAG

One of the pillars of the American Legion is Americanism - those actions taken by veterans to keep in the foremost minds of the American people to retain the faith, as represented by our American Flag. Here is an example of the American Legion Post 501 in keeping that faith.

It was the start of a normal day; I was assisting in preparing the club house room of the American Legion Post 501 for the next days Pancake Breakfast fund raiser, when a phone call took me away from setting tables with salt, pepper, sugar and jelly condiments. While several other Legionnaires continued to move forward in preparation for the next day's event, I picked up the clamoring phone. The caller was the engineer for a hotel located on the far west side of Madison, and early on he let me know that they needed our Legion Post assistance. He mentioned two concerns and could we assist? First, the hotel has 3 American flags that have seen their useful function come to an end. Could we provide proper disposal? "Of course, we have a fine program for that, where are they, and when could we come to pick the up?" was my response. He provided the address of the hotel, that he was available now, and I then indicated that I could be over within the hour to pick up the flags.

"What is your second need?" I inquired. He sheepishly indicated that while trying to raise their newly purchased American flag that it got stuck about 10 feet up the pole. It appears that the lanyard shifted off the pulley at the flag pole top due to the current high winds. "How high is your flag pole?" He stated it was 44 feet to the top! OH! OH! - I thought - we don't have any lumber or steeple jacks in our Post 501 membership. After verifying that the pole was not telescoping, nor hinged in order to allow the top of the pole to drop down to a reasonable height, I realized that his problem was beyond Post 501's ability to resolve.

American flag in need of help.

But I had a thought - Why not contact the local fire station. They may have a ladder truck sitting within the firehouse currently unattended. Since the fire folks are the first responders, just maybe they might be willing and able to help. He thanked me for this option to fix his problem, and promised to be at the hotel within the next hour for me to come out and pick up the three older flags. I said my goodbyes to my fellow legionnaires, who were still working on preparations for tomorrow's breakfast; jumped into my SUV, and drove off to the hotel. 15 minutes later, as I drove down the last

block to the hotel, I noticed directly in front of me a Madison Fire Department Ladder Truck #2 pulling into the same hotel driveway. "No way this is happening so soon! This is going to be a very interesting day" I said to myself as I pulled up near their vehicle and observed the 4 person crew descending from their truck, ready to do their thing.

The First Responders from Ladder Truck #2 Arrives timely..

I quickly saluted their willing support, and they inquired as to whether I was the caller for help. "No - he will still be inside the hotel. Let's go get him". The five of us dominated the reception area of the hotel: the receptionist was a bit overwhelmed, what with

all this sudden gathering of fireman in working uniform, until we asked for the engineer. Cesar came out right away, with a big smile of relief on his face. The Cavalry had arrived! We happy few exited the building, and the 4 man fire crew went right to work - setting up the outriggers, unhitching the ladder from it's cradle, and began to run the extensions up and out. The hotel engineer, Cesar, and I stood nearby, watching, waiting for guidance and I taking lots of pictures to record this memorable event.

The First Responders get right to work in setting up the equipment for action.

The pulley on the top of the flag pole was indeed quite high up, it

towered above the top four stories of the hotel facade. The fire team supervisor watched as his ground guide and the machine operator positioned the ladder closer to the pulley on the top of the pole.

Making the final adjustments to the ladder closing on the flag pullley, within just a few inches.

The youngest of the crew was strapping into his safety harness, and when the ladder, now extended all four sections out, at about a 60* angle, he virtually scrambled up, carrying with him a screwdriver, a pliers and a can of WD40. He was prepared!

The New Fireman in training loss the toss of the coin, he has to climb, while others supervise.

Now realize it was about 45*, with a wind out of the north at about 15 mph, conditions were a bit chilly. Never the less, he went right to work. Within about 12 minutes, he had the rope back on the pulley, tightened things up and hit it with his WD40 for good measure, and then signaled down to the hotel engineer to bring up the flag.

Getting close to the top, in temperatures of 40 degrees, with a 15 mpg wind out of the north.

Quickly it rose to the top, the wind caught and unfurled the banner and now it waved proudly from it's prominence, as it should. Mission accomplished! No injuries, no loss of life - just an excellent result.

Flag is now positioned in its rightful place.