

Alton VFW to showcase female veterans for Nov. 11 ceremony

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer
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ALTON - This year marks a century of women being allowed to serve in the United States armed forces.

To showcase that, Alton VFW Post #1308 Commander Tom Wilson said the majority of this year's Veterans' Day ceremony at the post will be undertaken by female veterans as well as women who are currently serving in branches of the armed forces.

"This year is 100 years of women serving in the armed forces - from 1917 to 2017," Wilson said. "The president didn't make the bill in full until 1947, but we have women from every branch of the service represented this year."

The event will begin this Saturday morning with a welcome from Colonel Sue Jano, who retired from the United States Air Force. Wilson said Jano is the only current member of both Post #1308 and its Women's Auxiliary.

An invocation will be offered by Karen Beebe of the United States Air Force before the national anthem is sung by Sherry Hornsey of the United States Navy.

Alton Mayor Brant Walker will offer a proclamation before Wilson - a former Marine - and previous Illinois State VFW Commander and former Post #1308 Commander Dave Stout, of the United States Air Force, will offer remarks.

Keynote speakers include Captain Liz Wszalek of the United States Air Force and Major Nicole Vallareal Bastian of the United States Marine Corps, both of whom are still currently serving.

Female veterans and current service members will also be laying wreaths in remembrance of veterans from each branch of the service.

A Medal of Honor wreath will be offered in the honor of Russell Dunham, the only Medal of Honor recipient from this area. It will be lain by his daughter Annet Wilson.

Second Lieutenant Robert Ryan of the United States Army Air Force will lay the P.O.W. /M.I.A. wreath. Ryan himself was a prisoner of war during World War II.

The Army wreath will be lain by First Lieutenant Amanda Zelnick, the Navy by Petty Officer Third Class Alice Thompson, who served from 1956-1959, the Marine Corps by Sergeant Shannon Yount, who served from 2006-2014, and the Air Force by Dana Reams, a veteran of both Desert Shield and Desert Storm.

Closing remarks will be offered by Jano, and a closing prayer will be offered by Women's Auxiliary Chaplain Sue Parrish before the Alton Post #1308 Ritual Team offers a three volley salute.

