

American Legion Riders Mandarin Chapter 372

“Riders lead the way”

Welcome 2020-2021 fiscal year. Wow! How did we get here? Our Mandarin Fallen Heroes Chapter 372 story is nothing short of amazing, and I am proud of our Chapter and our members.

In the spring and early summer of 2017, Chapter 372 was only an idea. You see, our Post had no Riders Chapter. We started researching the requirements and procedures to start a chapter and by early October of 2017 we had what we needed to ask the Post for a resolution (which we wrote) to start the Chapter. We presented the resolution at the November General Meeting and it was approved. Then began the ongoing task of getting the word out and recruiting members. We wanted to build a chapter where all Riders felt welcome and were enthusiastic about working diligently to support our Post, District, and Legion Family while having fun and staying safe. It worked!

By February of 2018, we had the requisite 10 members, created our SOP's and Standing Rules and applied for and received our Charter. We were officially ***Mandarin Fallen Heroes Chapter 372***.

I say again, I am proud of our Chapter and our members. It is important to remember that we did not and could not have achieved this by ourselves. We had help from Chapters in and outside of our Mighty 5th District. I will mention some of these at the risk of inadvertently leaving some out.

The first is the late John “Railroad” Moore, Director ALR 250. Railroad was a source of knowledge, but most importantly, encouragement and caring. (We lost Railroad to a MVA vs. motorcycle crash in October of 2018) He was someone we often turned to with, “Hey Railroad, how do we...?” or, “Hey Railroad, do you think you and your riders could support us on this ride...? We will always miss him.

Next, Jeff Rafferty from Chapter 283. Jeff showed us how tight friendships could become in the Riders Chapters and the District. He always included us in events and was there to help support us whenever he could. Also from Chapter 283 was Phil “Doc” Jansen who has been a huge help when we were learning how to create events like rides and steak dinners, etc.

Jim Hudgins of Chapter 57 in Lake City was tireless in making sure his Riders participated in any event our new Chapter created. He always followed up with suggestions and compliments and overall encouragement.

Another source of information and encouragement came from our 5th District Chairman, Vice Chairman and Adjutant, Dale Fish, Denny Luke, and Janie Fish. They encouraged all in the Mighty 5th to help us grow and welcomed us. And they were ultimately responsible for getting us chartered.

We have accomplished a lot in our few short years. Some of our accomplishments include: Creating rides that raised over \$12,000 to benefit PROJECT: VetRelief, K-9 Lines, our own post, and our own district. We have participated in many rides including this spring's *Round Robin* where we were able to give our District 5 a big enough advantage to end up second in the state of Florida. (Next year we WILL win the trophy!) Our chapter 372 Relief Ride allowed us to give

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over \$3,000 to our District to help our 5th District Posts hardest hit by the COVID-19 shutdown. We've been able to contribute to our Post 372 building fund, struggling neighboring posts, and the Elks Lodge to help with building repairs. Our Chapter rode from Lady Lake, Florida to Indianapolis, Indiana in the American Legion Legacy Ride which annually helps raise close to \$1 million for the American Legion Legacy Scholarships that benefit the children of veterans killed or injured since 9-11. I am proud to report that our little Chapter had one of the largest groups participating from any Chapter in Florida with 9 riders. In every year of our existence, our Chapter has participated in the American Legion Riders Annual Summit in Cocoa Beach. For our 2020 Summit, Chapter 372 hosted Riders from Colorado Chapter 22 that participated in our Florida Summit.

Our District 5 Relief Ride was so successful and so unique, we gained the attention of the National American Legion and they published an article about us on the National site and perhaps even the Legion Magazine.

As we close out our fiscal year, I would especially like to thank each and every member of our Riders Chapter 372. Extra special thanks to our officers who have shouldered the responsibility of creating the events and running the Chapter. My special thanks goes to our 2020-2021 newly elected Director, Chuck Benham without whom our Chapter would have been much less successful. I know he will be an awesome Director and know he can count on all of you to support him and the Chapter. Finally, I would like to especially thank our Adjutant, Robin Maltese, for her continuous service since the very beginning of our Chapter. She has worked tirelessly to keep us all together, and invented systems and created templates for all of the paperwork and day to day work necessary to run the Chapter. She did an awesome job keeping the Director on track and has once again agreed to be our Adjutant under our new Director, and I know she will continue to give her all to the Chapter. GREAT JOB American Legion Riders Chapter 372!

For the cause....Not the applause!

Thanks again,

Joe Maltese

Past-Director

ALR Fallen Heroes Chapter 372