**President Meintel’s Acceptance Speech**

Comrades, Brothers and Sisters & Special Guests,

I’m going to take the lead from Dan West and start with a story…As I sat in the Capitol Rotunda on May 1, now what day was that is that?? Yes, Loyalty Day. I listened to Brigadier General John Pippy give his keynote speech. General Pippy shared how his childhood experiences in veterans service organizations, in VFWs, inspired him to pursue a 32-year military career and a very decorated one at that. His words really hit me-- reaffirming the importance of our mission, ALL OF US--and how WE can IMPACT future generations.

While I was growing up, my Vietnam-Veteran, dad was serving in the Air Force, instilling in me a deep appreciation for the values of discipline, honor, and commitment. Both of my grandfathers served in World War II. Their stories and experiences exemplify the courage and resilience that define our veterans. The very veterans, sitting right here in this room. Your sacrifices touch my heart and fuel my respect and admiration for all who have served or are currently serving. This moment is both a privilege and a responsibility that I take to heart, being your newly elected President of the Department of Pennsylvania, Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United State of America. (*pause*)

Many of you have heard me say…the VFW is in my blood. My sister, Jennifer and I are 4th generation members of the Auxiliary and my niece Grace, sitting right there, is our family’s 5th generation member. I grew up with Memorial Day parades, VOD Banquets and 13-jars; crab feeds in a VFW pavilion named after my great grandfather who donated the land it was built on; I remember my grandmother making fried peanuts and chicken corn soup to sell in the club; I remember my mom as State Soloist, singing the National Anthem (Yes, I got her love of music but not her singing talent) and my dad, John, being the State Adjutant for the PA VFW. So, as I said…the VFW is in my blood.

Commander Loncar and I are committed to making this a TOGETHER year, where our collective efforts are enhanced by remembering our "why." Not just WHY we joined this organization but also, WHY we are active members, and WHY we want our organization to thrive into the future. By respecting each other and working together, we can create a powerful and I would say …unbeatable force… that drives this organization and strengthens our bonds. TOGETHER, we foster a culture of inclusivity and growth, where we encourage new members to join our ranks and contribute to our shared mission.

I want to take a moment to express my heartfelt appreciation to my husband Jim, an Air Force Veteran, for his beautiful nomination and all of his support that helped me to be able to stand here, before you. I want to Thank each of you, our dedicated members. Your time, energy, and effort are the lifeblood of this organization. You have chosen to volunteer for the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) and the VFW Auxiliary, organizations that stand as pillars of support for our veterans and their families. It’s your commitment and passion that make our mission possible, and for that, I am deeply grateful.

I am excited about the journey ahead and confident that, with your support and dedication, WE WILL impact future generations: Moving forward TOGETHER, Honoring our past, Serving our present, and Building a brighter future for our veterans, their families and our communities.

Thank you for this incredible opportunity and honor to serve as your Department President.

With deep gratitude and respect,

Andrea Meintel
President

Department of PA

Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary

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