

October Patriotic Instruction

Hello Brothers,

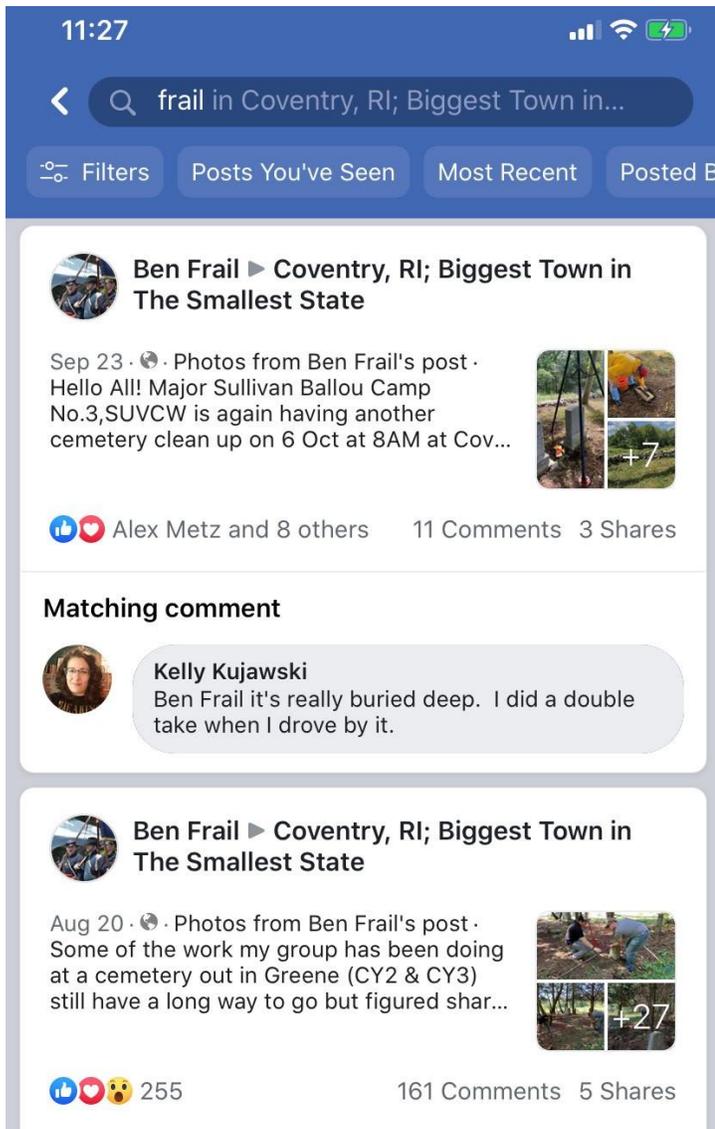
One of the things that has become increasingly useful in today's day and age is Social Media. When used appropriately sites like Facebook, Instagram and Twitter can be extremely helpful in promoting the work and mission of the order. Knowing which application to use to promote the order and how to use it is just as useful as knowing what type of adhesive to use on a gravestone or what form to fill out to apply for a grant. Over the next few months I will highlight a few forms of social media, what they are best used for. For this month's instruction we will focus on Facebook and the multiple ways you can use this application to further the goals of the order.

There are a few routes you can go when using Facebook to promote your Camp or Department. The first route is you can create a Public Group. Public Groups are a form of public forums within the application. Anybody with an interest in the group that is a member of Facebook can join and contribute to the discussion. Within the Public Group you can create events and invite the members of the group to them. This is a great feature for fundraisers, clean ups and open discussions that you might be hosting. In a public group I would refrain from using the event tool for meetings as you cannot limit who sees the event in a public group, if they are a member they can see it.

The other group route you can select is a Private Group. To gain access to a Private Group, the person must be invited by a Group Administrator or request access and then approved by a Group Administrator. This allows better security on who has access to information as well as what the potential discussion topics are posted in the group. In a Private Group you can also set up qualifying questions someone must answer prior to joining the group, Are you a member of the SUVCW or Allied Orders? If not, are you interested in joining the SUVCW or Allied Orders? Things of that nature. This will allow you to limit those who join to Brothers & Sisters or potential candidates. With the Private Group you can also create events and in this case, because you have already limited who has access to the group, you can do events for meetings and camp/department only functions. You can also use Private Groups to post information regarding recent meetings like the minutes or important follow ups.

Another route you can use with Facebook is creating a Page for your group. Pages are more like a website for your camp or department, but using Facebook's platform. Pages can be followed by anyone with an interest in your group. Much like a Public Group, Pages can have discussions brought up by anyone who follows the page, the largest difference is that administrators can post within the page and publicly as the page, or as the Camp/Department. For instance, my camp, Major Sullivan Ballou Camp 3, uses a page and we just recently posted photos from our Camp Encampment and the post author appears as "Major Sullivan Ballou Camp 3" not "Ben Frail". Your posts as a page are public, unless otherwise set by you, and the post will appear on the feed of anyone who follows you. When you have a group, the only time a post in the group appears on someone's feed is if: A) the post is authored by a page that you follow or B) the post is authored by a person they are friends with. A page can also create public and private events much like groups.

These are just a few lines on the benefits of these 3 types of Facebook features. Massive manuals could be written regarding how to best use these features but I did not want to put you all to sleep. The bottom line is that Facebook is an amazing tool, and each camp and department should have a Page or Group set up, or both (you can link a group to a page). In today's day and age, you can disseminate information about the boys in blue, or projects and events we have going on to celebrate these men, through all forms of social media. If we want to grow as a group, we need to tap into these tools, and the best part is that to set up these groups and pages it is free of charge. Again, using my camp's Page as an example, we have been cleaning up a local cemetery and have been posting photo updates on our page. I can then use my personal Facebook account and share these posts in groups I belong to, in this case I have been sharing them in a group that is dedicated to the town that the cemetery is in and a few other groups. This has caused the local newspaper to reach out to us to publish an article and non-members to come out and help. These are people who had no idea who our group was prior to us posting on Facebook, they now follow our page and are getting updates as to all camp activities, including ceremonies and displays we do. 5 minutes' worth of work to create a post with pictures taken at the clean-up, add a line or two of commentary (which yes knowing me is hard to believe it was that short) and then share it to a town group and you can see the results below:



This is just the main post, you can also see that people have chosen to share my post on their own feeds, which means more spreading the word to more people. On top of the positive feedback we have also received boots on the group updates on other forgotten about cemeteries with Civil War veterans buried there that are now on our list to clean up because of these posts. Now some of you may be wondering “What does this have to do with Patriotic Instruction?”

The answer is simple: EVERYTHING! Patriotic Instruction is not just “Hey this soldier did this that and the other thing” in a classroom or meeting setting. It is sometimes showing the public what we do to promote patriotism, even if it is in the form of cleaning up forgotten cemeteries on Facebook. We are in these cemeteries because of our pride for our country and the men that gave their “last full measure of devotion”. That by itself is patriotic, however, showing the public what we are doing, and why we are doing it, that is the instruction part of our job.

In Fraternity Charity and Loyalty,
Ben Frail PDC

National Patriotic Instructor

