

Historian & Media Relations Newsletter

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The holiday season brings so many beautiful events to photograph—Installation ceremonies, holiday parties, community service projects, and community drives. But taking great photos isn't just about pointing and clicking! With a few simple techniques, you can capture professional-quality images that truly tell your Auxiliary's story and make your Historian Book shine.

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Tips for Better Event Photography

The Rule of Thirds:

Professional photographers swear by the "rule of thirds," and it's easier to use than you might think! This simple technique instantly makes your photos more visually appealing and engaging. Imagine dividing your photo into nine equal sections using two horizontal lines and two vertical lines (like a tic-tac-toe grid). Instead of centering your subject right in the middle of the frame, position the most important elements along these lines or where they intersect.

- Turn on your phone's grid lines: Most smartphones have a camera setting that displays grid lines on your screen while you're taking photos. This makes following the rule of thirds super easy!
 - iPhone: Settings → Camera → Grid (turn on)
 - Android: Camera app → Settings → Grid lines (turn on)
- Position your subject at the intersections: Place people's eyes, faces, or the main focal point where the lines cross
- Use the lines for horizons: When photographing outdoor events, place the horizon along the top or bottom third line, not dead center
- Group photos: Position the group slightly off-center rather than perfectly centered

Why It Works: Photos with centered subjects can feel static and boring. The rule of thirds creates visual interest, draws the viewer's eye naturally through the image, and makes your photos feel more dynamic and professional.

There are several different ways to do a Historian Book! Here is another idea:

Digital File Organization System

For tech-savvy Auxiliaries who want to maintain digital records alongside (or instead of) physical books:

- Create a master folder structure on your computer, external hard drive, or cloud storage (Google Drive, Dropbox)
- Main folder: "VFW Auxiliary Post 8346 - 2025-2026"
- Subfolders by quarter or month
- Further organize by event or program
- Use consistent file naming
Format: YYYY-MM-DD_EventName_Description
- Example: "2025-12-15- Santa Saturday Group.jpg"
- Makes searching and sorting easy!
- Include documents, not just photos- things like event flyers, newspaper articles (PDF scans); Certificates received, thank you letters; Special reports, impact statistics

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Tips for Better Event Photography Continued:

Get Close–Don't Use Zoom! Digital zoom on smartphones makes photos look blurry, grainy, or pixelated. You lose important detail and sharpness. Photos may look fine on your phone screen but terrible when printed or enlarged

Move your feet! Physically walk closer to your subject. **Crop later:** Take the photo with extra space around your subject, then crop it afterward using your phone's editing tools—you'll maintain much better quality. Always capture a bit more space around your subject than you think you need. This gives you flexibility to adjust the composition later and ensures important details don't get cut off accidentally

When You Can't Get Closer: If you're photographing from a fixed position (like during a ceremony), take the wider shot and plan to crop it later. The quality will still be better than using zoom!

Tap to Focus: The Game-Changer for Sharp Photos
This one simple trick will dramatically improve your photo sharpness, and most people don't even know about it!

How to Do It:

1. Frame your shot the way you want it
2. Before you press the shutter button, tap on your main subject on your phone screen
3. Watch as the camera adjusts focus and exposure for that spot
4. Now press the shutter button

Why It Matters: Your phone's camera tries to guess what you want in focus, and it doesn't always guess right. By tapping on your subject, you're telling the camera exactly where to focus, resulting in sharper, clearer photos every time.

Pro Tip: If you're photographing a person, tap on their face or eyes. For group shots, tap on someone in the middle of the group.

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Digital File Organization System Continued:

Create a digital "yearbook" at year-end

- Compile into PowerPoint presentation
- Export as PDF for easy sharing
- Print professionally or present digitally
- Can include clickable links to videos or websites
- Backup everything! Keep copies in at least 2 locations: Cloud storage + external hard drive. This protects against loss or computer crashes

This format is Perfect for Posts that:

- Want to easily share with members via email or who prefer digital presentation at meetings
- Have limited storage space for physical books
- Want to submit to Department Convention digitally