Legion members gather for flag burning ceremony

By Donna Rhodes
drhodes@salmonpress.com

BELMONT — In recognition of Flag Day, which fell this year on Tuesday, June 14, members of American Legion’s Charles Kilborn Post 58 in Belmont gathered at the newly-installed Belmont Covered Bridge to hold tradition of all flag burning ceremonies for flags they have collected over the past year.

“As these flags have become faded and worn through use, and I recommend they be fittingly retired,” Commander Emeritus Bob Stevens reported to Post 58’s current Commander Richard Stanley.

Vice Commander David Schroth confirmed that the flags had all served two years or more in honor of the nation and seconded the recommendation that they be retired.

The chaplain’s prayer was then delivered before the gathering moved to the fire pit area where New Hampshire’s District Commander and American Legion Post 58 member Bob Firth began the ceremonial burning of the flags.

“As each of the flags gathered at the Belmont Fire Station and through Post 58 members were presented to Firth, they were first looked over to see if parts of them could serve in other ways.

“We’ll cut the blue field with embroidered stars off some of these flags and donate them to the Pease Greeters,” said Post 58 Adjutant Woody Fogg.

As the Pease Greeters welcome each service member who travels through Pease International Airport on their way to or from overseas deployment, they present them with embroidered stars from various flags as a thank you for their service. Flags from Post 58’s ceremony will now benefit their patriotic cause.

Flag burning ceremonies are a tradition with most veteran posts, like the American Legion’s Post 58, who seek to retire the “Red, White and Blue” in a dignified manner. Each ceremony is done in respect for not only all the flag that symbolizes for the nation, but all that they, as veterans, fought for many years to preserve.

Belmont Fire Department is among the many departments who collect flags that have become weatherworn while on display at homes, businesses and government offices, along with those that have been placed at local cemeteries for memorial events. Each is then held for the annual flag burning ceremonies in their respective town.

“It’s a veteran’s tradition to give respect in retiring an old flag and that’s what we’re here for today,” said Post 58 Commander Richard Stanley.

Residents who currently own older flags that are no longer serviceable are asked to drop them off at the Belmont Fire Department or with a member of American Legion Post 58 in Belmont for proper disposal next spring.