

# An Invitation

To: ACTIVE MEMBERS  
of the

Veterans of Foreign Wars  
of the United States

## From The: *Military* *Order of the Cootie*

The “Honor Degree” of the V.F.W.

### From the By-Laws

The Military Order of the Cootie is recognized as a subordinate and auxiliary order to the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. It shall be considered as the “Honor Degree” of the parent organization and shall be governed by and under the control of the National Convention, the National Council of Administration and the Commander-in-Chief.

Only active members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States shall be eligible for membership in the Military Order of the Cootie, and such membership shall be continued and conditioned upon retaining active membership in the VFW.

The objectives of the organization are to promote social and reunion features among the members of the order and to keep alive therein the spirit of optimism and humor so characteristic of the American serviceman.



### “WE PICK OUR COMPANY”

While the Military Order of the Cootie is desirous of increasing its membership, it is particular as to who may become a member.

By invitation, persons making application for membership in the Military Order of the Cootie shall have done much toward the promotion of a greater VFW, through being active members for at least six months in a Veterans of Foreign Wars Post and through completion of satisfactory service on a Post committee or satisfactory performance of Post duties or participating actively as a leader of post functions. The applicant’s Post Commander and Post Adjutant certify eligibility by signing the MOC Application.

### “WHY COOTIES? AREN’T THEY...?”

Yes, they’re just what you think they are! They’re those things that, as a little boy, you were told girls were. Pests! When our organization was founded, most VFW members were World War I Veterans. They looked for something humorous that they all had in common. Many non-combat hours were spent attempting to rid themselves of these parasites. Our forebears decided to emulate the qualities of the louse. For example they were **industrious**: when you found one, there was usually a dozen more nearby. They were **Fraternal**: Cooties worked together to remain with their host. Many stories were told of how Cooties saved their host by “putting the bite” on him just before a round went over his head, thereby saving him from harm. They were **Persistent**: once they decided on a host, they remained on the job through thick and then. We would take up these qualities and look for others like us. We would work hard for our Posts. We would work together to further its aims. We would remain steadfast to each other becoming “Closer than a brother, busier than a bee.” We would increase our circle of friends within the VFW. We discovered that girls were no more pests than we were. (Who knew!?) We would

increase and multiply by signing up as many eligible comrades as we could in the VFW, thereby increasing the number of possible candidates for our own “crummy fraternity.” Best of all, we would have fun doing it together!

### “CLOSER THAN A BROTHER”

Organized Sept 17, 1920 in Washington, DC, a number of VFW members and others recognized the need for an organization that would provide comedic relief to Foreign Service Veterans. On August 30, 1923, at the National Encampment of the VFW held at Norfolk, VA, the MOC became the official “side degree” of the VFW, an auxiliary to the parent that would bring the membership closer through social activities. This would be a diversion from the serious business that usually took place during a local, state or national gathering of the VFW. Originally classified as the “Fun Degree” this subordinate order of the VFW, together with its social functions, began to assume some of the obligations of its parent order so that greater stress could be applied by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States of America to its major programs.

### “HIGHER EDUCATION”

The Christie Braun Supreme Scholarship Program, sponsored by the Military Order of the Cootie, is designed to provide college educations for all students graduating from the National Home each year. In addition to undergraduate degrees, the program sponsors technical school scholarships and post-graduate scholarships for National Home alumni for annually selected students.

### “SPONSORSHIP OF A HOUSE”

In 2016 at the Supreme Convention it was voted and approved for the MOC and it’s Auxiliary to support one of the houses at the VFW National Home for Children. The House was dedicated at Cootie Christmas December 2016.

## “BUSIER THAN A BEE”

It was not long before the MOC began its program of activities that brought about its designation as the “Honor Degree” of the VFW. The activity began with the founding of the VFW National Home for Children at Eaton Rapids, Michigan and the filling of a library with practical books for the children. Later, Cootie Field, the swimming pool, the bathhouse and the boat dock were constructed through donations and various fund-raising functions sponsored by the local Pup Tents. Each year a Cootie Christmas Party is given under the sponsorship of the Grand Pup Tent of Michigan. This party has grown with the years with each child receiving a personal gift. The Cooties presented a fire truck, a fire station and equipment that have protected the National Home. The youngsters were given training in combating fires.

## HOSPITAL VISITATION PROGRAM AND BLOOD PROGRAM

With the outbreak of World War II, the MOC visualized the need for hospital visitations and the presentation of entertainment for hospitalized veterans. A program of “Keep ‘Em Smilin’ in Beds of White” was inaugurated and trained personnel were commissioned to serve with and work for the Veterans Administration Volunteer Service. This program has grown to such magnitude in our VA Hospitals that Hospital fund credits each year by local Pup Tents has reached well over nine million dollars with over one million patients being visited, Over thirty-one thousand visitations and over three million eight hundred miles traveled per year!

The Supreme Blood Program is designed to highlight the Community Activity program of the VFW. The Supreme Organization recognizes the efforts of our Cooties for their donations of blood and blood products as active VFW members in support of their local community blood banks

## ANNUAL TREK TO THE TOMB OF THE UNKNOWNNS ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY

The Military Order of the Cootie has gathered on a yearly basis for over 83 years to pay tribute to those who answered the call of our nation at the Tomb of the Unknowns, Arlington National Cemetery. In 2016 this function was moved to the Argonne Cross where more than 400 wreaths were laid at the cross by units of the Military Order of the Cootie. Arlington National Cemetery will always be a place of hallowed memories and a “Shrine of Each Patriot’s Devotion.”

## “HONOR DEGREE” OF THE VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS

The Military Order of the Cootie has a worldwide membership with Pup Tents located in our nation and in foreign lands. A local unit of the MOC is known as a “Pup Tent.” A State unit is called a “Grand Pup Tent,” and the National Organization is called the “Supreme Pup Tent.” Our meetings are known as Scratches and our officers designated as Shavetails.

This is a very brief outline of the make-up of the Military Order of the Cootie. We strive to emulate our mythical leader, The Great Blue Louse as we follow our motto of **Industry, Comradeship and Perseverance**. It was he who motivated one of our own to extend this invitation to you, and while all VFW members are eligible, not all are chosen. Our ranks are small by choice, and only those most eligible may become members of “the Honor Degree of the VFW,” The Military Order of the Cootie of the United States. You have been singled out as one whose actions have demonstrated leadership abilities in the VFW. We ask that you favor us with your talents and join your “lousy” buddies in our “crummy fraternity.”

For further information contact  
**ANY MEMBER OF THE MILITARY ORDER OF THE COOTIE THAT YOU MAY KNOW OR:**

**SUPREME PUP TENT**

**MILITARY ORDER OF THE COOTIE**

**“The Honor Degree of the VFW”**

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An Invitation to: \_\_\_\_\_  
A Member of \_\_\_\_\_  
Post No. \_\_\_\_\_ Veterans of Foreign  
Wars of the United States to affiliate with the  
Pup Tent No. \_\_\_\_\_

*"The Honor Degree of the VFW"*

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Cootie Number \_\_\_\_\_