St. Cloud town hall hears good, bad, ugly

State leaders ask McDonald to visit St. Cloud

Minnesota’s congressional delegation has asked Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary Bob McDonald to come to the St. Cloud VA Medical Center to help calm tensions between employees and management.

The invitation came on the heels of an official American Legion visit to the facility in mid-December that included a town hall meeting and a briefing at the hospital.

“We urge you to visit the St. Cloud VA Health Care System as soon as possible to reassure the employees and the thousands of veterans they serve of your commitment to providing a healthy and productive workplace for which to deliver the highest quality medical care,” the letter from the delegation said.

The town hall meeting included testimony from one employee who said he quit because of the working conditions in the food service area of the hospital at St. Cloud. He alleged that whistle-blowers at the facility felt threatened.

The request for an official visit rachets up the scrutiny of the medical facility, which in previous years had built a reputation for quality service and care.

There was no immediate reaction from McDonald as to whether he would honor the request.

The American Legion sent Louis Celli, director of National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation leadership, and was chaired by Louis Celli, the national director. The Legion later met with St. Cloud VA Medical Center staff.

“The American Legion believes strongly that the VA is a system worth saving, and we’ve said that many times in the last ten years,” Celli said. “But we need to know what’s going on with the VA, and not just in Washington but here in Minnesota.”

The VA faces challenges it can’t solve locally, but we can work with the VA to solve those problems in Washington,” Celli said.

Celli said the Legion leadership meets with the VA leadership two or three times a month to exchange ideas.

About 80 veterans came to the Town Hall, and about 25 of them testified as to their experience, particularly at the St. Cloud VA Medical Center.

The St. Cloud VA has been under scrutiny lately for several reasons, one of which was a charge that employees who voiced concerns or who tried to be whistleblowers were retaliated against.

Last chance to avoid dues hike

Minnesota Legionnaires who have not already renewed their membership, and new members wishing to join, have one last chance to get in under the wire and avoid the $5 national dues increase.

Memberships done through the post, though, can still be processed without the dues increase.

V4V grants $90,000 to outdoor programs

The Minnesota Veterans for Veterans Trust Fund has approved a grant of $90,000 to support outdoor activities conducted for veterans at Camp Ripley near Little Falls and at Veterans on the Lake Resort near Ely.

The grant will provide $30,000 a year for three years to support lodging and food for four outdoor veterans outreach programs.

For over 25 years, Camp Ripley has hosted a deer hunt, and in recent years has added a turkey hunt and a fishing event known as Trolling for the Troops. And for over 40 years Veterans on The Lake has hosted an annual veterans event.

National Commander to visit 12 posts in Minnesota in February

National Commander Dale Barnett of Georgia will spend five days in Minnesota at the beginning of February, visiting 12 posts along the way.

Barnett was elected at the 2015 national convention in Baltimore.

The tour will begin in Forest Lake, will head north and west, and will finish up with five stops in southeastern Minnesota.

Stop along the way include: Princeton, Little Falls, Morris, Litchfield, Delano, Hutchinson, Wells, Adams, Stewartville, Preston and Winona.

Those who plan to attend are encouraged to make reservations at these stops. Contact information is on page 6 of this issue.

Minnesota Legionnaires are also planning to visit 12 posts in Minnesota in February.
threatened by management. The medical center, in an internal investigation conduct-
ed by the VA and released in August, noted that the St. Cloud VA lost more than 25 primary care doctors in three years, straining workloads for the remaining doctors, sky-
rocketing. The investigation also said St. Cloud ranked near the bottom in employee satisfaction.

One former employee said a change in management in her department “turned it into one of the most horrible places ever. It used to be a great place to work.” She said employees complained workloads were unbalanced and that there was a “vendetta” against people who came forward.

Medical Center Director Barry Bahl addressed the turmoil in a staff meeting and said doctors coming to St. Cloud was difficult. “Minnesota is not like California. It’s cold in the winter,” Bahl said. “We also pay less than the private sector. If we simply can’t hire people, what do we do?”

Bahl said the hospital complex will continue to recruit doctors, although many come and stay only a short time. “If we keep recruiting, perhaps we’ll get some people who will stay.”

A sample of other comments from veterans and others at the Town Hall:

— A long-time patient said he’d never had a long wait time at the St. Cloud VA Medical Center.
— Another said the government needs to increase VA funding to hire more doctors in rural areas.
— One veteran said he had been hospitalized and then released from home but at home he was still very sick and so he called the hospital. He said the appointments person said to him: “Well, what do you want us to do?”
— A veteran said he talked to people in the waiting rooms all the time, and nobody has anything bad to say about St. Cloud. “If it wasn’t for the VA I wouldn’t be here.”
— A woman veteran said she had gone to the VA because she was dropping things. She said she was sent to rehab “because they wanted to treat the symptoms first.” The hos-
pital kept giving her medication to fight the pain, but never did an MRI to find the cause. Eventually, because she was on medication, she lost her job. After many months, the hospital finally agreed to do an MRI and found a bulging disk. “If someone like me has a problem, there must be something wrong inside. You just can’t just take medication. This could have been resolved long before I lost my job.”
— A veteran criticized the mental health providers at the St. Cloud VA and said employees at the VA had falsified his records.
— An advocate for a veteran said that he had tried to see a neurologist at the St. Cloud hospital, but they didn’t have one. Instead he was referred to a private doctor in the Twin Cities. The care was good, but then the VA hired a neurolo-
gist and forced the veteran to come back to St. Cloud. A major confusion with which medicine the patient was to take then ensued.
— Another veteran criticized the wind turbine at the medical center. “I’ve never seen that blade turn yet.”
— A woman veteran said the process to have seamless transition between the military and the VA was a failure, and that it took two years to get her records straight. She also said the VA needs to do more in alternative treatments rather than just use drugs.
— A veteran said he had hernia surgery and he was sent home that day from the hospital with an 11-inch surgery scar and nine Tylenols. He went back to the St. Cloud emer-
gency room to see if he could get more pain relief, and had to wait 45 minutes before anybody even talked to him. He had to wait 35 more minutes to see a doctor.
— The widow of a veteran said that her husband had been diagnosed at a private hospital and was told to get an emergency MRI to look at a tumor. The VA delayed the MRI for three weeks. In the meantime, the tumor had grown greatly and not long afterwards, her husband died. “I think there might have been options available to him if they had caught the tumor when I’m broken hearted. I think the system failed my husband.”

St. Cloud Chief of Staff Susan Markstrom, M.D., said the hospital had changed its policies on MRIs since that incident.

Director Bahl said that the hospital saw 650,000 patients last year. If there’s even a few fractions of a percentage that have problems, we need to fix that. Things have been brought up today that we’ll be looking at. We’ll bird dog it until it’s all done.

Barry Venable, the chief patient advocate at the hospital, said there are three full-time patient advocates besides himself. He said that every complaint is checked into, and that every veteran who complains is told of the outcome of the investigation. “We make a few resolve almost every time, but I must say that resolving the issue and satisfaction are not totally synonymous.”

In other words, the veteran may not agree with the reso-
lution. Veterans Choice was mentioned by several who testified. Celli said the American Legion had supported the program that allows veterans who live a distance from a VA facility or who have a long wait time to get private care paid for by the VA.

“But we only supported it as a relief valve,” Celli said. “We don’t want it to stick around forever. We want the VA to provide that care, not contract it out.”

Celli also spoke on the larger issue of privatizing the VA. “If you think privatization will help, I can promise you that out of pocket expense will increase. I can guarantee you that.”

Celli said the Legion is considering entering into a con-
tract with a major research institution to find out what VA care really costs. “How do we compare with Medicare or with private providers? It’s all guesswork. It’s all based on a 30-year-old research.”

“We want to make sure that we as veterans don’t get lost in the economic shuffle that has stagnated Washington D.C.”

The hearing lasted about two hours at St. Augusta Post 621. It was held as a regular meeting of the post.
Endorsements

Lucas endorsed for Department Vice Cdr.

Harry J. “Jim” Lucas has been endorsed by Walker Post 134 for Department Vice Commander (Sixth and Ninth Districts) for the 2016-17 Legion year. Lucas has served his Post as Vice Commander, Membership Director, Color Guard Commander, and Norman Member and has withdrawn from chaplain race.

Debra Norman, who was endorsed as a candidate for Department Chaplain, has withdrawn as a candidate. She cited family issues, and thanked those who supported her candidacy.

Thank you

I would like to thank everyone for their concerns, prayers, phone calls, get well cards and visits during my recent stay at the Minneapolis VA Medical Center and at home. This was a total shock to Chris and myself when I had to have triple bypass surgery. I am on my way to a full recovery and the doctors told me that I will be better than new. Our Minneapolis VA facility is one of the finest in the country and I could not have had better care anywhere else.

I am on my way to a full recovery.

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The American Legion Family is there for you when you need it. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

Marland and Chris Ronning
Happy New Year. Hope you had a blessed Christmas. Weather sure has been mild so far. Thanks for all the kind acts from my wife and I. New year time for those New Year resolutions. This year besides your personal resolutions please consider what you feel needs to be addressed in the American Legion. If you feel your input is needed, a resolution is one way of making that happen. Write down what you see as the change needed and take it to your next post meeting. Your officers can help you put it in the form of a resolution. It may be a change you see needed for your post, district, department, or your national organization. It all starts at your post meeting.

Soon your post will receive forms for annual reports. Legionville and Boys State reservations will be asked for. If your post has youth interested and does not have funds it is time to have that fund raiser. If that is not possible there are some suggestions that may be helpful. No youth should be unable to attend for lack of funds. If your post has no one who is eligible please consider a donation to the scholarship fund to assist others. It is also time to look at who in your post has been working the membership program so you can submit them for proper recognition. Their extra efforts should be praised.

Our post and district revitalizations have been productive. Thanks to all of you who have helped out. We have several scheduled in the next couple of months. The revitalizations should be complete by April 1st to ensure an accurate count of Membership for your Delegate strength. These can be a fun and rewarding event to please help out if asked. It takes a group effort to make a revitalization successful.

It is time to make that visit to your local Armory and make that connection with those serving. We need to have more involvement with these soldiers and show our support as well as tell our American Legion story. Many of these young families have someone deployed or recently returned. We can relate to their situations and help them through tough times. As we begin planning our events for this coming year we need to include these families and plan events their entire families can be part of. These soldiers and their families are our future. We need to include them in any events we have throughout the coming year, or plan a new event they can be part of.

District Mid Winters are here the next couple months. Please make an effort to attend. This is where information on all of our programs is shared. Share this information with all your fellow Members to help them become better informed of all that we do. Invite your local media to attend these and other Post activities and share the information in your local community. If we don't tell our story, no one will do it for us.

When you look at marketing, brand awareness is critical to success. Wear you American Legion Family Logo every chance you get. When your have this Legionnaire take it along to your next appointment for whatever it might be. The more you wear it and leave it there the more you contribute to the brand. You can do the same with your post and district newsletters.

It is a simple way to get the word. Membership is the lifeblood of our organization and you can help make a difference. When you have completed your annual consolidated post report share this information with your local media. Put up a poster in your post home or meeting place so others can see all the good we do and the impact we have in our communities.

A great year starts with a great beginning. I am hoping you all have a great year. May God Bless and safe travels to all.

We should no more be messsing with the artwork than we would with Gilbert’s soaring arches and triumphal dome. The Capitol is Minnesota’s most beautiful building. The Capitol’s art work is part of its soul.

No, Father Hennepin probably did not hold up his cross while naming St. Anthony Falls while obeisant Dakota in incorrect dress huddled at his feet. But the painting does capture other important information with our pioneer forefathers and foremothers that are historically important.

We’re sure you could go to the Sistine Chapel and find many Biblical inaccucacies or improper dress among the figures Michelangelo created. Yet we haven’t heard anybody lately talking about moving them to another building and replacing them with more accurate versions.

It seems that part of the argument for the proponents of bowdlerizing the Capitol artwork is that the new generation is too stupid to realize that the paintings and murals are period pieces, reflecting that time and not our time. We reject that.

Minnesotans of all gender, cultural and racial backgrounds are smart enough to figure that out.

Leave the artwork alone. It is as much a part of that building as the rotunda or the legislative chambers. It was the best they could do in 1905, and some of it is of world class standards.

Don’t impose our transitory view of the world on a monument to another time – a monument that continues to inform us with its ideals and breathtaking scope.

Happy New Year.

The holidays are behind us. The gifts have been passed to loved ones. It was a very busy time for all and also stressful for others. We know there are those who have no one to share a gift or a warm meal with even though there are a lot of churches and homeless shelters that should be their doors to homeless and take care of the shut-ins.

We should be those who take the time to those in need. As you search the Bible one will find that many verses in the Bible cover the homeless and the poor. I picked Proverbs 22: 2 – “Rich and poor have this in common: the Lord is the maker of them all.” Also, Matthew 25:40, “Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.”

The American Legion leads the way in taking care of those in need. It is a very important part of the four pillars. We watch out for the veterans and their families. As each of you have served your country in the military, you are still serving as a member of The American Legion.

We have a great amount of thought on what has been a blessing in my life, as I am sure you have. I feel so lucky to have the family that I do.

We bring our loved ones into this world and are blessed to watch them grow into adults and think, “I did good”, but I did not do this alone. We pray to keep them safe from harm and that they will live a Godly life. We never know what the future holds for anyone.

The year 2015 is now past and we are looking forward to another year of our life. However, we must look back on all the events that have taken place in our life and in our world; what is taking place around us.

We are still at war and it seems our country, the United States of America, are still the peacekeepers in this world. We pray everyday for peace, but there are those who will not or cannot accept peace. How can this happen? I pray for the refugees that have to leave their home land to seek a safe haven in another part of the country or the world and are expected to learn the customs of a foreign land to seek a safe haven in another part of the country or the world and are expected to learn the customs of a foreign land to seek a safe haven in another part of the country or the world and are expected to learn the customs of a foreign land.

When our forefathers came to America it was to find a better life. It is the same for those who are trying to get into our country.

I have seen rioting take place in other countries and I think, there must be a better way to solve the problem and now this type of behavior is happening in our own country. There is rioting and destruction of property… Why?

People are using the first amendment of the Constitution of the United States, which gives freedom of speech to everyone, for bad behavior. I did not think that it meant it was okay to riot and burn the flag of the United States, or that we should take the name of God out of things such as the pledge of allegiance.

The year 2015 of The American Legion, start the new year of 2016, let us work for what we stand for. For God and Country.

“Whoever saves one life, saves the whole world.” – Rabbi Chalil.
Legionville Ice Fishing/Rally

In conjunction with the Sweetheart Rally at Legionville on Saturday, Feb. 6, there will be an ice fishing contest and other family activities.

The fishing contest, from noon to 2 p.m. on Legionville Bay, North Long Lake, north of Brainerd, the site of Legionville. If weather does not permit, the contest will be rescheduled. Entrance fee is $20 per pole and 125 holes will be drilled. Contestants will have a two-hole maximum, one pole per hole. For more information, or to get a registration blank, visit the Legionville Post website: mleigion.org.

There will be fun for all ages with a bean bag toss and minnow races at the education center.

A Red Ribbon Breakfast will be held on Sunday, Feb. 7, at the Legion. The education center will have membership turn-in from noon-3 p.m. The chili cook-off will be from 3 to 4 along with the results of the fishing contest, and the program will start at 4 p.m. There will be no tickets for the meal, but a free will collection will be made and all proceeds will go to Legionville.

There will be dancing after the program with Wayne and the Boys.

Free Legal Clinic

The Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans will be offering a drop-in free legal clinic for veterans. The clinic covers veterans benefits, expungement, wills, real estate and other legal issues related to veterans, estate planning, and housing counseling.

The clinic will be held on Jan. 12, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., Minneapolis VA Medical Center, Flag Atrium Balcony Room 28114.

Agent Orange Town Hall

Vietnam Veterans of America, Chapter 470, is holding a town hall meeting at the Anoka American Legion Post 102 on Wednesday, Jan. 13, 6:30 to 9 p.m. The meeting is to inform veterans about Agent Orange and its effect on our children and grandchildren. There will be a speaker.

Plane on Display

Zimmerman Post 560 will be displaying a model plane built by Ron Donwray of Princeton, and then refinished by a post member. The model is of the B-25 Mitchell Bomber, a World War II aircraft. The wingspan of the plane is 70 inches. The model is on display in the post’s club area.

Veterans Hiring Expo

The Minnesota Wild and a host of other organizations are sponsoring a Veterans Hiring Expo for veterans on Tuesday, Feb. 9, from 9:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. The expo will be for service members, veterans, and military spouses and will be held at Excel Energy Center in St. Paul, the home of the Wild.

An employment workshop will be held from 9:30 to 11 a.m. at which you can get the hiring fair will start. Job seekers can pre-register by going to www.cvent.com/d/fvkgpW4. Resumes can be uploaded.

For information go to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation website: www.uschamberfoundation.org/hiring-our-heroes/faq.

Legionville Ice Fishing/Rally

LGTVQ veterans are invited to join a veterans support group that will meet Thursdays from 6:30 to 8 p.m. at the Center for Changing Lives, 2400 Park Avenue, Minneapolis. Any veteran who is interested will include stigmas, stress, resource information and humor and coping.

Taps

Meltzer, Bernard Russell “Bernie,” 77, Marine veteran of the Vietnam War, died Nov. 29, 2015. He served 21 years retiring as a gunnery sergeant. He served as commandant of Cannon Falls Post 142.

Nang with Squadron MAG-15. Melter served as commandant of Cannon Falls Post 142. He was a member of the color guard and he assisted in setting up the first evacuation hospital.

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The model is on display in the post’s club area.

Molitor, C.J. “Cy,” 87, Air Force veteran of the Vietnam War, died Nov. 22, 2015. He was a member of the 136th Infantry. He was a member of Roseau Post 24.

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The year 2015 was good to me with good health and many new friends. Just a quick recap of my year as it unfolded for me. As the Second District Commander for the SALs, I had a very good year with starting two new SAL squads, reactivating a squadron in my district and ending the membership year with a nice increase in mem-

bership (with a final percentage of over 105%), so I was very happy at the beginning of the year as my term as Commander.

It was the great support of my membership team that made all this happen so my thanks has to go out to them. In June at Legionville we held our SAL Convention where I was elected the Detachment Commander for the Sons of the American Legion.

Again, I had set goals and again they are high goals but very attainable. In August, Vickie and I attended the National Convention in Baltimore, which was a very rewarding, knowledgeable, and a great experience for me. The history stories of the city were many and too numerous to mention here.

In October, it was a trip to National Headquarters in Indianapolis for training as a new Detachment Commander. From these sessions, I brought back many new ideas just from listening to others. I have attended many dinners throughout the state and, yes, the podiums are starting to show.

I want to say thank you to all the posts and squadrons for the events that I have received so far.

Membership is a very important part in the success of a Detachment and, as I stated above, I have set a high but very attainable goal. To have success, you have to have good communication so I set up a Conference Call which has worked very well with the 3 calls we have had so far. From these calls, questions have been asked and answered and ideas shared. I set this Conference Call primarily for the Detachment Membership team but as I see it now, I am going to open it up to ALL squadrons in hopes it will help these squadrons in some form.

If there are any squadron commanders interested in attending please send your email to Detachment 4 and I will give you the needed phone numbers.

In this 2016 Membership Year, two new squads have been started and I hear some may be in the making which strengthens our Detachment membership but more impor-
tantly, greatly strengthens the Legion posts they are attached to.

All American Legion posts should consider starting one. It only takes 10 qualified male individuals to start a squadron in a post. Let us know if we can help you start one.

Detachment is meeting all of Nationals goals ahead of schedule and has ended the year at 105% and as of the Membership Report of December 16th, the Detachment of Minnesota is at 63.74% which is just awe-

some. I am so proud of the work everyone is doing.

It’s great to see a younger veteran and an older veteran together in the boat, and it isn’t long before they’re sharing like experiences they’ve had in the military even though they’re generations apart,” said Stephen “Butch” Whitehead, State Adjutant of the DAV.

"It’s a good feeling to see younger veterans and older veterans together in this program. It’s not just for the younger generation, it’s for all veterans,” said Randy Tesdahl, State Adjutant of The American Legion, said, “These are fairly large scale events we are putting on, and expenses can range from $3-12,000 per event. We provide the meal prep and service, lodging and giveaway items such as T-shirts and caps.

We try to create a program that includes noted out-
doors celebs from Minnesota such as Bud Grant, Al Lindner, Ron Schara and Dave Genz,” Tesdahl said. “We have also invited celebrities featured on various outdoors tele-
vision programs and radio shows. We are showing our younger new generation veterans that being a member of a VSO is more than just going to meetings and sitting in a bar. We are doing things for our fellow veterans.”

Dean Ascheman, this year’s Chairman of V4V, said, “We are proud to be a part of these events. In past years, V4V has been able to help with smaller grants that have provid-
ed for equipment needs such as hunting blinds for the VSO’s. This grant will be used primarily for the lodging and food for the four events over the next three years and lead to the sustainability in the future for Minnesota veterans.

“Camp Ripley and the Veterans on the Lake have always been a very integral part of these events, Tesdahl said.

Col. Scott St Sauver, Camp Ripley Garrison Commander said, “These events are great way to share the environmental diversity at Camp Ripley with our Minnesota veterans. When I visit with recently deployed soldiers, the conversations always revolve around deer camp, the fishing opener, and being outdoors back home in Minnesota.”

"These events have grown exponentially in recent years and it is of critical importance the new generation of veter-
ans experience the work of the VSOs and groups like V4V.”

Minnesota Veterans 4 Veterans Trust Fund ( V4V ) is a Minnesota 501(c)19 Trust created by the sale of Big Island on Lake MInnetonka to the city of Orono. The interest from that fund provides grants for Minnesota veterans projects. Big Island Veterans Camp on Lake Minnetonka was at one time a veteran’s get-a-way owned by the Big Island Board of Governors who, by statute, were appointed to this board by the four major Veteran Service Organizations (VSOs) of Minnesota. The American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Disabled American Veterans and The Military Order of the Purple Heart.

In 2005 The Island was purchased by the City of Orono for $5.8M and, all again as required by the same statute, a new organization (V4V) was formed and tasked with leadership, ownership and stewardship / oversight of the monies received through the sale of the Big Island Veterans Camp. The funds from the sale are invested with Wells Fargo and the grant process is also managed by Wells Fargo. The Minnesota Veterans 4 Veterans Trust Fund (V4V) has the fund’s oversight and responsibility for making grants. Again, as required by statute, the board is comprised of two appointed members of each of the four major VSOs with final grant approving authority in the hands of the Minnesota Commissioner of Veterans Affairs.

Since the first grant in January of 2007, V4V has pro-
vided over $1.5M in grants to Minnesota organizations pro-
viding service to veterans and still maintains $5.4M of the original trust.

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<tr>
<th>Post</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<th>Contact</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Forest Lake</td>
<td>8 a.m. breakfast</td>
<td>Feb. 1</td>
<td>651-464-2600, Post</td>
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<td>Princeton</td>
<td>noon lunch</td>
<td>Feb. 1</td>
<td>763-352-7814, Tess</td>
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<td>Litchfield</td>
<td>6 p.m. dinner</td>
<td>Feb. 1</td>
<td>507-852-5944, Post</td>
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<td>8 a.m. breakfast</td>
<td>Feb. 2</td>
<td>320-589-3495, Cal</td>
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<td>noon lunch</td>
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<td>8 a.m. breakfast</td>
<td>Feb. 3</td>
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<td>507-381-3595, Dorette</td>
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<td>Feb. 3</td>
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<td>Feb. 4</td>
<td>507-452-2827, Sam</td>
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Pearl Harbor Observance

Richard Thill was an eyewitness to the beginning of World War II for America.

Thill, 92, who was the featured speaker at the Pearl Harbor Day Remembrance Ceremony at the Armory at the Capitol, was one of 84 Naval reservists from St. Paul who served on an old World War I destroyer, USS Ward. Ward was guarding the entrance to Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, when the ship got word that one of the four minesweepers coming out of the harbor had spotted a periscope.

“Nobody told us about mines out there,” Thill said. The ship went to general quarters, but the periscope could not be found. Unknown to the U.S. forces, the Japanese had sent in five midget submarines to try and enter Pearl Harbor where much of the American Pacific fleet was anchored.

Thill, who was a cook on the ship, went back to making breakfast for the crew. “On a destroyer, the pancakes are never round, but they tasted just as good.”

A little later, the destroyer again went to battle stations because another ship reported a conning tower in the water. A Navy PHY search plane came by and dropped smoke bombs to mark the spot.

The Ward approached the area. “We had a new skipper on board, and he’d only been there two days. But he was convinced it was some kind of sub. And away we went. At first he wanted to ram it, but then he decided he didn’t want to wreck his ship.”

The Ward approached the sub on its port side, and the number one gun in the bow of the destroyer fired a shot but missed. “We were only about 100 feet away, and the range finders on the guns only go down to 600 yards. We were too close. They couldn’t lower the gun enough to hit it, and it went sailing over the conning tower.”

Thill’s battle station was as an aimer on a gun on the other side of the ship.

As the destroyer went by the conning tower, which was only about five feet by five feet, the ship’s number 3 gun on the starboard side fired at the conning tower and hit it, putting a four-inch hole in either side of the structure. “We could tell the starboard side fired at the conning tower and hit it, put a four-inch hole in either side of the structure. It’s possible the two-man crew was killed by the Ward’s shell. It’s possible the two-man crew was killed by the Ward’s shell. It’s possible the two-man crew was killed by the Ward’s shell. It’s possible the two-man crew was killed by the Ward’s shell. It’s possible the two-man crew was killed by the Ward’s shell. It’s possible the two-man crew was killed by the Ward’s shell. It’s possible the two-man crew was killed by the Ward’s shell. It’s possible the two-man crew was killed by the Ward’s shell. It’s possible the two-man crew was killed by the Ward’s shell.

“The sub had drifted several hundred yards before settling on the bottom. Thill said the Ward reported the sinking of the sub to the headquarters, but no action was taken and no alert was sounded. The attack on Pearl Harbor by hundreds of Japanese planes happened an hour later.

“It was a Sunday, and I suppose it was all junior officers at headquarters and they wanted some evidence we had sunk a submarine. But, of course, our evidence was at the bottom of the sea.”

During the attack, Ward was attacked by two Japanese bombers. “But they attacked us side by side, and our ship was so narrow that the bombs fell on either side of it.”

Thill was given a standing ovation by the crowd at the armory.

The audience also heard from Department of Veterans Affairs Commissioner Larry Shellito, and the Kerkhoven-Murdock-Sunburg Marching Saints Band performed several numbers. The band has been chosen to represent Minnesota at next year’s 75th commemoration of Pearl Harbor Day in Hawaii.

Gov. Mark Dayton was scheduled to speak, but was having back surgery in Rochester.

The program was put on by the MDVA, the Memorial Rifle Squad at Fort Snelling and the Pearl Harbor Survivors Association.

Tom Mullen of the Fort Snelling Memorial Rifle Squad performed “Taps” at the ceremony.
Al Sanders was flying his fifth mission over Germany in a B-24 Liberator when his bomber was hit by anti-aircraft fire. Bailing out over Belgium, he finally escaped back to American lines three months later. He was aboard the famous “Ghost Train” of Brussels.

**By Al Zdon**

Bailing out over Belgium and badly spraining your ankle during the parachute landing was tough enough. But Al Sanders in the next few weeks had to hide out in the countryside, get captured in Brussels because of a traitor, spend weeks starving in a jail, and escape from the clutches of the German Army on the famous “Nazi Ghost Train” before he could rejoin the Army Air Corps.

First Lt. Al Sanders was born in 1918 and grew up in New Orleans. Kentwood is best known these days as the hometown of Britney Spears. Sanders was flying a Piper Cub for a half hour on December 7, 1941, and when I landed, the sheriff was waiting for me. He said, “What are you doing flying that airplane around? Don’t you know there’s a war going on?”

Sanders didn’t know, but soon he was at the recruiting office trying to get into the Army Air Corps. “I had a terrible time getting into the service. It was still pretty close.”

Sanders passed his physical, and later earned his wings at Blytheville, Arkansas. He was sent to Sewart Air Force Base in Smyrna, Tennessee, and learned how to fly a B-24 Liberator, a large four-engined bomber.

He did training at several other sites, including Tucson, Arizona, before getting orders to report overseas. By this time, the crew for his B-24 had been assembled and he and the crew had been issued a brand new B-24 bomber.

Sanders had the nose painted with the LSU Tiger, and the nickname was “Mike, the spirit of LSU.” The crew flew the plane across the south Atlantic to Dakar and after stops at seven bases, wound up in Sudbury, England, just north-east of London, in April 1944. They were assigned to the 486th Bombardment Group (Heavy).

The crew had flown four missions prior to May 28, 1944. The bomb drops over German targets had been scary, but uneventful.

On that day, Sanders and the rest were awakened at 5 a.m. “You have time to use the bathroom, shave and get ready and then head for the mess hall.” After that, it’s a trip to the supply room to get whatever gear a crewmember needs for the flight. For Sanders, it would be a parachute.

 Sanders’s Liberator, Aircraft 682, was flown a bit higher than the lead plane so that if the leader turned right, Sanders would be able to turn with him without crashing into him. The bombers cleared the channel at about 12:45 and headed across Holland. “We never used the radio to talk to other planes in the formation, but we’d be talking all the time inside the plane on the headphones. Outside the plane, the crew called me ‘sir,’ but once we were underway, they

**AL SANDERS**

At home in White Bear Lake

**FIRST LT. AL SANDERS**

During World War II

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And we’d say, ‘Oh, my God, we’re going to Berlin.’ ” Behind the curtain was a huge map of that day’s mission. The flight would be to north central Germany to a synthetic oil refinery near Leipzig, a city southwest of Berlin. It would be an eight-hour flight.

It was still dark when the crew was transported by truck to the Spirit of LSU. There, each would get ready for the mission according to their role on the plane. There were 10 young men on the crew.

The take-off that day was delayed one hour until 10 a.m. Sanders’ plane taxied out to the runway. “We’d be sitting there with the brakes on and the engines running full. The plane was heavy, and we’d have to get it off the ground before we got to that farmer’s barn at the end of the runway.”

After takeoff that day, it got a little dicey for a time. “We had sweet cream on our windshield (fog) and we couldn’t see anything. But you just did what you were supposed to do, and when we broke out on top of the fog we were almost in formation.”

Once in the air, there would be 36 bombers in the formation, split up into groups of three. Sanders’ position was just to the right of the lead bomber, which had special lights in its wings and tail, and slightly above him. “They wanted us to fly wingtip to wingtip, but we probably had 10 feet in between. It was still pretty close.”

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In the ready room, an officer would be standing by the side of a large curtain as the pilots filed in and took their seats. “Then he’d say, ‘Ready, boys?’ and he’d pull the curtain.
called me Sandy. We were like a family, really.

“Most of the guys on the crew were 18 years old. None of them were old enough to vote except for me and the top turret gunner. I was the old man at 26.”

The lead plane announced they were 200 miles out, which meant it was about an hour to the target. The Liberators could fly at about 185 miles an hour.

As the target came near, the flak began. On this day, the flak was extraordinarily heavy. “The Germans had fighters out, but they didn’t come close to us. They didn’t want to get into the flak. Their main job was to tell the gunners on the ground exactly what our altitude was. We were at about 18,000 feet.”

Still a little ways from the target, both Sanders’ plane and the lead plane were hit simultaneously by the anti-aircraft fire. Immediately, both bombers lost their right inboard engines.

The lead plane immediately dove down and began to circle back towards England. All of the other planes in the formation, according to their training, followed him down and around.

Only Sanders’ plane continued toward the target. “We heard later that someone in another plane radioed, ‘There’s some crazy guy who’s going in to bomb the target by himself.’ That would have been us.”

The Spirit of LSU stayed at 18,000 feet and Sanders dropped his bombs into the smoke of the burning refinery. Only then did it circle back toward home.

He tried to keep up with the formation, but that was not possible with an engine gone. Not long after, the other engine on the right starts to sputter and then dies. “Pretty soon we lost another engine. We flew over Belgium with two engines. I told the crew, you’d better start getting out because we’re going to have to leave this thing.”

Sanders ran the two remaining engines at max power, but they begin to overheat. He radioed a “mayday” and his aircraft’s position. By ones and by twos, the crew bailed out of the stricken aircraft until only the pilot and co-pilot were left.

“All I had left by now was the right outboard engine. I set the autopilot to keep it flying as straight as possible because with one engine, the plane will want to circle. I got out with my parachute into the clear air, but I looked and the plane was coming back at me. But then it crashed into a potato field on a hillside.”

As the parachutes drifted toward earth, both the German Army members in the area and the Belgian underground volunteers were watching. “When I hit the ground, I sprained my ankle. It was pretty bad.”

The Belgian resistance fighters were first on the scene and helped Sanders along as fast as he could limp, but when they had to go through a fence, his parachute harness got caught and cut his face all down his brow and nose. He was bleeding profusely.

“There was a young Belgian girl there with red hair. She took out a white handkerchief and held it to my face. Years after at a reunion in Belgium, I was telling the story of that young girl, and somebody said, ‘C'est moi.’ I turned around and there she was, the same redhead.”

The escape included riding bicycles, which improved their speed until the chain came off Sanders’ bike. “That was a disaster. Time was spent hiding in a field.”

He was finally taken to a safe house. “The resistance took everything from me except for my suntans (uniform) and my boots.”

When the Germans came around and asked where the “luft gangster” was, the Belgian patriots told them that the pilot had gone down with the plane and burned.

The resistance moved Sanders, who was now dressed like a laborer, from place to place. One method of transportation was a hay wagon with a false bottom. “A German soldier poked a pitchfork into the hay, but I was okay.”

Meanwhile, back at home, his wife Millie gave birth to their son, Mike, just two days after the crash. She also received the dreaded telegram saying that her husband was missing in action.

A young doctor was brought in to see Sanders. “He couldn’t do anything about my ankle, so he just wrapped it up and put it back in the boot and pulled the laces tight to act like a cast.”

Eventually, Sanders was brought to a large barn. “I walked in and there were 17 men in German uniforms. I thought it was all over.”

But it turned out the men were escaped Russian prisoners of war who had stolen the uniforms. They were also armed to the teeth.

“Food was hard to come by. ‘But there never was any shortage of something to drink.’ At one point, another pilot was brought in. ‘It was great to have somebody who could speak English.’”

At a farm in Wisbecq, Belgium, things got dicey when the Germans encircled the farm and blocked all the roads. At this time Sanders companions were the other American pilot and three of the Russians. They hid under a floor in the attic of the barn. The main activity of the Americans was to keep the Russians from storming out and trying to kill the Germans.

Word came down through the resistance that it might be possible to smuggle the Americans into Switzerland, but they would have to go to Brussels first.
They drove like mad, and when we got to town, we headed for a garage at great speed. I wondered what they were doing. Just as we got there, the garage door opened, we drove in and they hit the brakes. It was as wild a ride as you can imagine.

For a time he stayed with a Belgian family in the city. "She apologized to me because they had nothing to give me except beer and potatoes. I told her that was fine."

It was at this time that Sanders and the others became acquainted with Prosper De Zitter, a man with one thumb who was posing as a member of the resistance, but was actually a German agent.

Sanders was told he would need a passport and other papers to make his escape to Switzerland, and that they needed to go to the Palace of Justice in Brussels. Unfortunately, it was a ruse planned by De Zitter, who was captured after the war and executed.

Once there, Sanders was taken to an office and the door was slammed. "There was a Lugar pointed at us. And then the fun started. He told me to take off my clothes down to my shoes. I said, 'No.'"

"He asked me what I was doing. I said I wasn’t doing anything, but I didn’t want to take my clothes off. He took me next door and another officer asked me why I didn’t obey the command. I said I just didn’t want to take my clothes off. They called me a wise guy."

Sanders was taken to St. Gilles Prison in Brussels and put in a cell. There was a daily interrogation, but Sanders refused to give more than his name, rank and serial number. The prison was full of Allied airmen and civilian political prisoners. Sanders stayed there for about four weeks. It was now September of 1944.

"One night, the cell door opened and the Germans were saying, ‘Raus, raus.’ We just had time to put our shoes on and we were out in the dark getting on a big truck. "They put 47 of us into one small railroad car. There was only room for some of us to stand and others of us to sit."

Sanders had been put aboard what would later be called the “Nazi Ghost Train.” With the Allied armies approaching, the Germans were anxious to move the prisoners from Brussels to prisoner camps in Germany. The 30 cars on the train were crammed with 1,370 political prisoners and 41 Allied airmen, including Sanders. "We spent two days and two nights on the train, and we were still in Brussels."

What was happening was that the people of Brussels were determined not to let the train depart with all the Belgian prisoners on board. To that end, they sabotaged the tracks, had engineers call in sick, and lost a locomotive. The Germans, while moving the train around, actually lost track of the cars that contained the prisoners of war, and they were shunted off to a side track. It was Sept. 2, 1944.

"We got the door open and a couple of guys volunteered to try and escape. Off they went, and it was bang, bang, but they didn’t touch them in the dark. Then a couple of more guys went, and the Germans shot but couldn’t hit them."

"I talked another American pilot into going, and pretty soon it was our turn. The door opened and off I went, but the other pilot stood in the boxcar door and wouldn’t budge. I was on my own."

"I started running and made it into the darkness. I hadn’t run that fast since I was at LSU. I could hear the bullets ping off the railroad tracks. Bing, bing."

"I headed for the canal and dove over a six-foot embankment. I jumped right on top of the first two guys who had escaped."

Sanders saw a boat tied up down the river and headed for it. "I got to the boat and I didn’t know what kind of welcome I’d get. I knocked and the voice inside said, ‘Queen Wilhelmina.’ I answered, ‘President Roosevelt.’ The voice said, ‘Comrade,’ and they let me in.

He spent three days on the boat, and then crossed over the canal to the Summer Palace. By this time, the Allies were coming into Brussels. "A Jeep came by, and I hopped on board. He took me into town. They were so happy to find someone who had escaped. We went to a hotel where I could get food and drink, and, boy, did I eat. And then, boy, did I lose it."

He was taken to an airfield there, and he rushed across the airstrip to a waiting Dakota C-47 transport plane. "The plane landed in London, and Sanders was taken by ambulance to a hospital. He was severely malnourished from his time in the prison, and his ankle had never been properly treated. “I still had on the tatters of my civilian clothes. The nurse said, ‘Take those off right now.’"

He was finally able to send a telegram to his wife. He was still unaware that he had a son.

"They kept me there until they thought I was okay. One day a doctor came in and he said, ‘This is yours.’ I looked, and it was a Purple Heart. I said, ‘That’s great.’"

Eventually, Sanders got a pass and went back to his base north of London, but nearly everyone was gone since the airfields had moved to France as the Allies advanced. First he went to the home of a British family where he was billeted. "The mother thought I was a ghost and started screaming. Then she ran out and hugged me. I went over to the base, but nobody there wanted to talk to me. They had no interest in what I had done. They did let me eat at the dining hall."

Sanders was sent back to the United States where he spent the rest of the war training other pilots. He was at Fort Worth when the war ended.

After the war, Sanders decided to stay in the military and retired in 1962 as a major. He had advanced to flying jets.

He went back to college and wound up teaching at a junior college. He and his wife had one more child, Winki. Over the years he was able to round up every one of his crew, who all managed to survive the war, and they had several reunions over the years. Only two are still alive at this time. He went to a reunion in Belgium where he was able to meet again with many of the families in the resistance who had sheltered him.

He moved to Minnesota a few years ago to be near his daughter. Millie died in 2013 after 71 years of marriage. Al Sanders lives in White Bear Lake.

Nearly 20,000 B-24 Liberators were built during World War II.

The cockpit of the B-24 was a jumble of gauges and controls.

Al and Millie Sanders were married while Al was in training to become a pilot.

Cadets of the Old War Stale

Louisiana State University honored Sanders by naming him to their Hall of Honor in 2009 for his military and civilian careers.
Hello Comrades. I trust Christmas was a joyful holiday for you and I hope the New Year looks bright. The First District Christmas party was fun and the caroling at the Rest home more than enjoyable. Post 91 in Austin was the host for the party.

Past First District Commander Kenny Nelson passed away over the holiday period. He was a good friend and comrade. My condolences to his family.

The Pheasants for Veterans program is doing well. I attended the appreciation dinner at the Minneapolis Veterans Hospital. The pheasant was excellent and the veterans were pleased.


Thank you to the dedication and hard work from the entire chair-persons of the district to bring along some blue-capped year, let us know what you think. We need all officers and your contact info. We are changing the program a little this January. Remember any dues getting to Department after January 16. Now onto the New Year. Is your post working actively serve and in harm’s way. We are having our Mid-Winter at Cosmos on January 16. This year will be a one day event and done jointly with our American Legion family. I know you will have a very busy year and enjoy the changes.

As the New Year progresses we need to put on that blue cap and recruit other veterans so they can enjoy the benefits we enjoy. The strong voice a veteran uses on the issues that impact all veterans is only as passionate as we are at being veterans. Your passion can be contagious to other veterans and the membership is what needs to happen to strengthen our voice. Don’t let your membership goal stop you from achieving your post’s goal of helping all veterans.

The National commander will be in the district and we need to show our support for the hard working posts that are hosting. The message of Commander Barnett will be well received and appreciated. He has gone the extra mile for us and now we will go the mile for him.

It is now time to start planning for your remembrances for our fallen Comrades Sunday. We are able to use our Legions to realign the significant event and sacrifices of their lives for another year.

Let us move on to enhancing our Legion programs, projects and activities.

DISTRICT

FIRST DISTRICT
Roland Hanson
Commander

SECOND DISTRICT
Ryan Hill
Commander

THIRD DISTRICT
Don Skow
Commander

FOURTH DISTRICT
Dan Williams
Commander

FIFTH DISTRICT
Gary Martin
Commander

SIXTH DISTRICT
Dewayne Collins
Commander

SEVENTH DISTRICT
Karen Welander
Commander

EIGHTH DISTRICT
Jennifer Havlick
Commander

NINTH DISTRICT
Denise Milton
Commander

Our membership year is rolling along very well thanks to our hard working directors, but the last 10% is always the hardest, so lets all get to work on this and ourselves at goal in January. Remember any dues getting to Department after January 16th will be changed at the 2016 rate (5.50 increase), so please help us get Director Pat Logan and sev- eral area members did a revitalization in the Egan area, and get us new members. Thank you and your team! The ‘Has Beens’ Rally will be held in Savage. We need to have also a go round by then so lets all help the Has Beens put together a successful rally.

The next big thing in the Third District will be our Midwinter in Silver Lake on January 30th. All district chair- man are asked to submit a written report to our District Adjutant Linda Dvorak by January 15th, and please include your contact info. We are changing the program a little this year, let us know what you think. We need all officers and chair-persons of the district to bring along some blue-cap- pers to the conference, we need their input also. The American Legion is a great organization and getting better, but we need everyone’s participation.

The Fabulous Fourth finished calendar year 2015 well. Thanks for the coordination and hard work from the First District Family: The Ladies Auxiliary, The Sons of The American Legion, The American Legion Riders and of Department of Minnesota Post #548. Thank you all for everyone who have contributed to our common success.

I will district’s recognition to pay a special recog- nition to a good friend of mine. This person has been a Legionnaire for 56 continuous years. He has been very active serving the Legion and District at meetings and events. I’ve known him for nearly 15 years and throughout the years he has demonstrated his love for God and Country. I want to take the opportunity to say thank you to Cliff Gustafson.

Cliff has been a personal help to me and many other-
## World War II History Round Table

### Navy pilots recall carrier war in the Pacific

So what was the best fighter in the Pacific in World War II, the Corsair or the Hellcat?

That debate has been raging for over 70 years, and it was continued at the December World War II Round Table at Ft. Snelling.

Lyle Bradley, a Marine and a Corsair pilot, and Dick Mann, a former Hellcat pilot, continued the friendly controversy at a meeting that looked at the first couple of years of the carrier war in the Pacific.

The Hellcat. It was a very easy plane to fly and it had good trim. In the time I was in the Navy, I flew about 800 or 900 hours in the Hellcat and only two or three in a Corsair.

Bradley was adamant about his choice. “I flew the Hellcat, and it was a beautiful plane, but it was not as good as a Corsair. But they did have the same engine. The Pratt and Whitney people did a fabulous job at producing engine.

Mann grew up in Fort Dodge, Iowa. “It was a different world. Everything was closed on Sunday, and relatives took care of relatives and didn’t rely on the government.”

He joined the Navy at Ft Snelling and did pilot training around the country. He did his first carrier landings on the USS Bunker Hill, converted into a freshwater aircraft carrier in the Great Lakes.

In the fall of 1944, he reported to the South Pacific as a fighter pilot aboard the USS Saratoga. “It was an old ship, but a good ship. It could do 30 knots. And we had new planes.”

On one mission in his Hellcat, he was doing combat air patrol off the coast of Japan. “The weather was horrible. We knew there were Japanese airplanes in the vicinity.”

When it came time to get back to the ship, though, in the bad weather he couldn’t find the Saratoga. “I found the USS Enterprise instead and landed there. I stayed overnight and went back to the Saratoga in the morning. I just was just glad and happy to be on land.”

In early 1945, the Saratoga was part of the Battle of Iwo Jima. “We were between Iwo Jima and Japan, and that was not a great place to be. Three Japanese kamikazes came at us, and they must have come in low because they came in under the radar.”

“We went to great distances, and less than a minute later, they hit us. The hangar deck was on fire. It was late in the day and it was very dark. We developed a four or five degree list. Then we were hit by two more kamikazes.”

“We had 40 or 50 planes gassed and ready to go, but we just shoved everything overboard. There were only two Hellcats left out of four.”

“I finally got smoked out of the ready room, and I went behind the five-inch gun by the island. It thought it was a wire.”

Bradley said the plane had to stop at Johnston Atoll for refueling. “This was bad for us. We didn’t have the fields.”

Mann also flew over Japan looking for prisoner of war camps. “They were supposed to have a ‘PW’ written on the roof. And we found one. I wrapped up some cigarettes and candy in a T-shirt and dropped it to them. I was so interested in dropping it, that I damn near hit a tree.”

B radley grew up in Dubuque, Iowa, and joined the Marines during World War II.

Part of his training was at Flemming Field near downtown St. Paul. “We were flying Stearmans, and all of a sudden we couldn’t see the ground. A fog had rolled in and trapped 20 of us in the air. You only had two choices. You could bail out, but then you’d never know where your plane would crash, or you could come in very slowly and try to find the ground. I was coming in very slowly when all of a sudden, zing, a big number one went by. I had just missed the First National Bank Building. But then I knew where I was and I found the field. All 20 of us got down by going very slowly.”

His first fighter plane was the Wildcat, an older carrier-based fighter. “It was a terrible plane. It tried to kill me five different times. But then I got to fly the Corsair, and it was like Heaven.”

He flew to Hawaii as a passenger on the China Clipper, a one-of-a-kind flying boat built by Pan American Airways.

“After we got airborne, the pilot came back and asked if there was another pilot on board because the co-pilot was sick. So I went forward and was the co-pilot all the way to Hawaii. It turned out I flew almost all the way there because the pilot was sleeping. We could do about 1/10 knots, and the auto-pilot didn’t work. When I finally saw Diamond Head I was so happy. I was exhausted.”

Another pilot in the war effort was also interesting. “On board the plane there were five pilots and five Navy nurses. Well, I can’t tell you everything.”

Bradley said the plane had to stop at Johnston Atoll for repairs. “We sat under the wing and killed a couple of bottles of Southern Comfort. We were singing quite well.”

The invasion had begun in early August of 1942, and, Mann said, by Sept. 27 the Cactus Air Force had run out of planes. More planes were ferried in, and in mid-November the Cactus group of planes from the USS Enterprise, the last carrier left in the Pacific at that time, scored a major victory by destroying a Japanese battleship and sinking seven of 12 Japanese troop transports bringing re-enforcements to Guadalcanal.

The rest of the transports were run aground, and were easy picking for continued bomber attacks.

Moore noted that in the first year or so of the war, there were four major carrier battles and only two more during the rest of the war.
ST. CLOUD DEDICATES REHABILITATION CENTER -- A ribbon was cut in December to celebrate the opening of the new Rehabilitation Center at the St. Cloud VA Medical Center. The 19,000 square foot center will offer expanded treatment areas and state-of-the-art equipment.

BACKUS CHRISTMAS PARTY -- Santa brought some cheer to World War II veteran Paul Kunde at the post’s annual Christmas and customer appreciation party.

WOODBURY WALL OF THANKS -- The Woodbury Post 501 and Santa presented its annual Wall of Thanks at the Woodbury Mall. Donors can pay tribute to a veterans and the name will be displayed for several weeks.

FALLDIN APPLE DONATION -- Minneapolis Falldin Post 555 donated apples to Columbia Heights Elementary School. From left: Commander Donovan Orttel, Principal Michelle DeWitt, Vice Commander Paul Soderberg, Adjutant Ray Eiden, and Membership Director Virgil Persing.

NORTH BRANCH HONOR -- Legionnaire Everett Pearson, center, received his 70-year pin from Orv Ottenness and Randy Koivisto.

BRECKENRIDGE OLD TIMER -- Eugene Leinen, left, was honored at Breckenridge Post 53 recently for his 73 years of membership. He is in the top 10 in the state for longevity of membership. Greeting him are Department Commander Jim Kellogg and Post Commander Kira Barbosa.

MONTICELLO DINNER -- Monticello had a Christmas Dinner with featured speaker Melony Butler, director of Eagle’s Healing Nest. From left: Don Lee, Cheryl Latham, Butler, Ted Farnam and Jeff Grimm.

REDWOOD FALLS CHRISTMAS -- Redwood Falls Post 38 presented Christmas blankets, notepads and cards to 27 veterans in local facilities. The honored Harry Knudsen with a certificate for 70 years membership. From left: Pat Schmidt, Jim Mertens, Knudsen, Jeanette Mertens.
As we start the New Year 2016 and look out into the big picture of our organization – What do you see?

New Year 2016 is the time of new beginnings, learning experiences and to gain new knowledge. It is my hope that Districts and Units are working on this same type of revitalization. All the tools you need are on the National web site and many things are on the Department site. If you can’t find what you need and still have questions, do not hesitate to call Department and speak with one of the employees. They will direct you in the right direction!

At this time I would like to “thank” all units, friends, co-workers, and family for all the invites, food, gifts, & help getting me to where I need to be. Your hospitality has been outstanding.

Remember, January is National Security and Legislative month. Make sure your Units are informed of the legislative concerns and changes for our Veterans. Keep informed. Contact your representatives and Senators to make them aware of your concerns for our veterans. Let your voice be heard.

May we pray that a culture of “goodwill” will excite new happiness, and abundance of new friends. That it will be a year with new peace, success with other Junior members so we can grow the program. Junior members are the Auxiliary’s future and we must nurture and promote what they do.

2016 POPPY ORDERS

Poppy orders are still being accepted in the department office. As of this writing, we have received orders from 232 Units. Please get your order into the Department Office. We need to know how many 2016 Poppies are needed so we can plan accordingly. If you have already ordered and need to place a second order, please do so.

Shipment of Poppy orders has been ongoing. Upon receipt of your order, please check it carefully and report any discrepancies to the department office immediately. Please do not wait until Poppy Day.

ANNUAL REPORTS

Annual reports have been sent to all Unit President’s in the January Unit Mailing packet. Please make sure and go through the reports and instruction sheets. If your Unit doesn’t participate in all of the programs be sure to fill out the ones you do participate in and return them. If your Unit is inactive and doesn’t participate in any of the programs, please send them back stating “do not participate” on the form.

SECOND DUES NOTICE

The National organization will be sending out a second dues notice around January 15, 2016 to all Senior members whose 2016 dues were NOT received and recorded by the National Headquarter by December 10. That means someone from you will receive this second notice though you recently paid your dues.

If you have already paid your dues and receive another notice, please disregard it. We know that some of the dues and the dues notices cross in the mail.

Reminder: Any member who has not paid her 2015 dues by January 31 is considered delinquent and loses her rights, privileges and benefits of membership. As of January 1, 2015 dues reinstates her as a member in good standing.

SCHOLARSHIPS

All scholarship applications are due into the department office by March 15, 2016. Let your schools and community know about these scholarships. There is seven (8) Department scholarship awarded each year at $1,000.00 each. The Past Presidents Parley Health Care Scholarship organization requires the necessary information for printing the 2016 dues notices. Every Unit will receive a notice asking for the amount of the unit’s 2017 Senior and Junior dues, and the name and address of the person whose name should appear on the year 2017 dues notices. The information and form will be in your January Unit mailing. The information is due into the department office no later than March 31, 2016. We would appreciate your cooperation and getting this form back to us in a prompt manner. This form will also be on our website. Make sure and discuss this with your Unit at your next meeting and vote on your Unit dues so the form can be filled out with the correct amounts for 2017.

SCHOLARSHIPS

Question: What has your Unit done with the copies of the scholarship applications sent to you last fall? Are they being sat on in your Unit’s files, or have they been taken to your local schools and shared with the students who are searching for ways to finance their education? If you are in need of additional copies for distribution, you may duplicate those you received or contact the department office for additional copies.

CORRECTION

The endorsement for Sandra Fredrickson to run for the 2016/2017 Alternate National Executive Committee member was incorrect. This position will not be eligible for candi-dates until the 2017/2018 Auxiliary year. This was a new change to our Constitution and there error wasn’t caught until after the Legislaire came out. For the year 2016/2017 the position of Alternate NEC will be appointed by the Department Executive Committee.

NATIONAL EMBLEM SALES

The National Emblem Sales catalog for the year 2016 has been sent to all Unit Presidents and Post Commanders. If you have not received your copy by the end of January, please request a copy of same directly from National Emblem Sales. 2016 prices are now in effect.

WASHINGTON CONFERENCE

The 2016 Washington Conference will be held in Washington DC, February 21-24, 2016. If any member is interested in attending, please contact the department office for details.

SECRETARY SANDIE’S NOTES

Another year is starting and the weather has been cooperating with my drive so all is good. The days are now getting longer instead of shorter which makes me very happy. We have Annual Reports out to the Units, Girls State reservations to the Units, Junior Conference registrations out to the Units so now it is up to you to get everything back to me. It is one big circle we have here at the Department
Auxiliary Bulletin

Continued from Preceding Page

Office and with your cooperation and participation it makes us the successful organization we have become. The year 2015 was a very interesting for me with many very highs and very lows.

It sure makes life interesting. This year our focus is to come up with ways to help Units get their memberships paid and get new members to join. We must get the picture out there of what a wonderful organization we are and what we do. I do remember when I was young (yes I can remember that far back) and always thought anything with the word “auxiliary” meant the old grandmas in our communities were getting together for coffee and it was for them only.

It never even dawned on me to join the organization as there was never any information put out there explaining what it was and what it did. We all really need to get the word out there.

Sorry for the sermon, I generally like to keep this pretty easygoing. I have to let you in on what two wonderful staff members got me for Christmas.

If you remember what I wrote about Jan and Julie being so wonderful in last month’s notes, I was presented with two packages of bon-bons and some very comfortable socks to put my feet up with - we really do have a good time at work.

To all of you out there reading this, please have the best year of your life in 2016, keep up the spirits and help me and your Executive Committee find ways to get the best kept secret in world - Join the American Legion Auxiliary to help veterans and their families.

THANK YOU VOLUNTEERS

There is a very special group of people who serve our hospitalized veterans every day of the year. These are our Hospital Home Representatives and the volunteers who work with them. Each month is busy for them as they make the stay of our hospitalized veterans a bit more pleasant and comfortable. During the month of December they are exceptionally busy making the stay of our hospitalized veterans a bit more pleasant and comfortable.

Send care packages to our active military. Find out if there are families that you could give a Gold Star or Blue Star Banner to. Look for contacts who know of active Military families. Wear red on Fridays to “Remember Everyone Deployed”. Become informed about issues affecting military families’ home life, such as PTSD. Program is the Yellow Ribbon program. Assist with a blood drive with your American Legion. Honor ROTC and JROTC Cadets, by hosting a dinner. These are just a few things what National Security is. With winter upon us, don’t forget to have a Winter Survival kit in your vehicle. Don’t forget about our St. Cloud ornament program. It is always in need of volunteers.

My challenge to you is to make goodie bags for the service members and their families such as gift cards, magazines, treats and even something for the children that are traveling with them. You can also find more information in our Unit Guide and in our Unit mailings.

Margee Keller
Department National Security Chairman

January is ALA National Security Month


POW/MIA Remembrance service falls under National Security. Support the troop and family programs of The American Legion. Take care of wounded warriors and their families, collect comfort items once they get home. Help with household chores. Suggest to them to sign up in the VA system.

Legislation is where the laws that govern our nation come from. To make a difference in the legislative process, we must develop a relationship with our Legislators. We choose our elected officials to carry out the difficult task of determining which laws and policies will serve our best interests. To perform their job, legislators rely heavily on input from a variety of sources. Leadership, teamwork and a clear understanding of how and when to make a concert-ed effort to get Legislation passed are necessary to get the job done. As Auxiliary members, we follow the mandates set forth by the American Legion. It is important that we are aware of these issues and address them in a very timely manner today and in the days going forward.

Being a Legislative Advocate takes time. Keep informed on veteran’s issues and the bills that will affect them and their benefits. Some excellent resources available are the Legionnaire, The Dispatch, and websites such as The American Legion (http://www.legion.org/legislative). Also, our close working relationship with the membership National Security Mission is to make goodie bags for the service members and their families such as gift cards, magazines, treats and even something for the children that are traveling with them. You can also find more information in our Unit Guide and in our Unit mailings.

CHRIS RONNING
Legislative Chair

HOSPITAL HOME REPS -- Front Row: Gloria Lindquist, Sioux Falls, Mary Ann Davis, Minneapolis, Jan Benson, St. Cloud. Back Row: Judy Kumerow, Luverne, Phyllis Mealey, Silver Bay, Sandra Gibson, Minneapolis, Carolyn Albertson, Fargo, Doris LaFayette, Fergus Falls, Darlene Wondra, Hastings

HONORED BY DISTRICT -- Elaine Karsmo, Raymond; Longline 7th District, Sergeant-at-Arms, was honored for her work with the Auxiliary recently.

Margie Keller
Department Legislative Chair

It’s also Legislative Month for Auxiliary

Margie Keller
Department Legislative Chair

Funeral Plans for Veterans

Purple Cross has been serving America’s Veterans since 1948 and continues to offer the best funeral plans available. With Funeral Preplanning you can:

• Protect your burial funds from rising hospital expenses
• Protect your family from financial burden in time of grief
• Gain peace of mind knowing your funeral is taken care of

Yes, I would like to know more about:
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For a free Funeral Preplanning Cost Estimate, please return this coupon to Purple Cross, 15116 Manthou Rd NE, Prior Lake, MN 55372 or call Jerry Albrecht at 952-226-6393. Absolutely no obligation!

Name:
Address:
Phone:
Birth Date:

Margie Keller
Department Legislative Chair

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New Orleans  
March 20-12, 2016
Tour Includes:  
* 4 Seasons Tour Director, Jenny Gilbertson  
* Deluxe accommodations  
* 14 meals: 8 breakfasts, 6 dinners  
* Memphis Rock ‘n Soul Museum  
* Guided tour of a Louisiana Plantation  
* Riverboat cruise on the Mississippi River  
* Gaming at Harrah’s Casino  
* Guided tour of New Orleans  
* Bayou Air Tour  
* Audubon Park  
* Garden District  
* Louisiana State Capitol  
* New Orleans Museum of Art  
* National Ornamental Metal Museum  
* Baggage handling for one suitcase

$1,499.00 Per Person (Double Occupancy)

New York City Tour  
June 22-26, 2016
Tour Includes:  
* 4 Seasons Tour Manager Larry Alvey  
* Roundtrip private jet charter flights from Minneapolis to New York City  
* 4 nights’ accommodations at the Hotel at Times Square  
* Two Broadway musicals, Aladdin and Wicked  
* Launch at Coney Island  
* Manhattan Island City Tour  
* 6/11 Memorial and Museum  
* Daily continental breakfast  
* Baggage handling for one suitcase

$2,599.00 Per Person (Double Occupancy)

Savannah, Jekyll Island & Beaufort  
April 4-9, 2016
Tour Includes:  
* 4 Seasons Tour Director, Joyce Langsford  
* Deluxe accommodations  
* 14 meals: 8 breakfasts, 6 dinners  
* Tours of Jekyll & St. Simon’s Island  
* Guided tours of Savannah, GA and Beaufort, SC  
* Lazarette Street  
* Telfair Academy  
* Wormsloe Historic Site  
* Chippewa Button Museum  
* Jekyll Island Museum  
* Baggage handling for one suitcase

$1,499.00 Per Person (Double Occupancy)

National Parks, Utah & Arizona  
May 2016
Tour Includes:  
* 4 Seasons Tour Director, Joyce Langsford  
* Deluxe motor coach transportation  
* 18 nights accommodations  
* 13 meals: 10 breakfasts, 3 dinners  
* Bryce Canyon, Zion National Park, Grand Canyon,  
* Painted Desert & Petrified Forest  
* Sedona National Park  
* Baggage handling for one suitcase

$1,439.00 Per Person (Double Occupancy)

Heart of Alaska  
July 28-August 4, 2016
Tour Includes:  
* 4 Seasons Tour Director Anne Gilchrist  
* Delta Air Flights between Minneapolis to Anchorage  
* 7 nights accommodations  
* 7 breakfasts  
* 7 dinners  
* 7 nights accommodations  
* Excursion to Seward  
* Excursion to Anchorage  
* Kennecott Mill & Chugach Spirits  
* Excursion to Haines  
* Prince William Sound Cruise  
* Meares Glacier

$2,547.00 Per Person (Double Occupancy)

Alaska Cruise & Tour  
August 19-31, 2016
Tour Includes:  
* 4 Seasons Tour Director Sue Rucker  
* Delta Air Flights from Minneapolis to Fairbanks and return from  
* Fairbanks to Anchorage  
* All sightseeing and escorted fox as outlined in the itinerary  
* Prince войны  
* Glacier Bay Cruise  
* All meals and accommodations while onboard the  
* National Geographic Endeavor  

$3,427.00 Per Person (Double Occupancy)

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Reverse Mortgages

Call for a free consumer guide and personal quote.  

- Must be 62 or older.  
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Dignity Planning

Funeral Plans for Veterans

As a veteran you may qualify for certain funeral benefits.  
Dignity Planning offers one of the last end-of-life planning tools available.  
Through documenting your final wishes and purchasing a final need plan, you will:  

- Protect your family from any financial burden in time of grief.  
- Gain peace of mind by knowing your funeral is taken care of.  
- Yes, I would like to know more about:  
  - Traditional Funeral Cost  
  - Cremation Cost  
  - Payment Plan Options  

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