Leading Candidate Rohan tells conference: ‘We are family’

MARSHALL — Destined to be the first woman commander of The American Legion, Leading Candidate Denise Rohan of Wisconsin had one word for Minnesotans at the Fall Conference: Family.

Rohan is due to be elected national commander at the Reno Convention this coming year, and the convention she presides over will be the Minneapolis Convention in 2018.

“We are an American Legion Family, and we are doing our best to keep this country great,” Rohan told a joint meeting of Auxiliary and Legion at the Red Baron Arena in Marshall. “We always should be one happy family united for a common cause.”

She spoke of how hard the deployments of service people over the past 15 years have been on the families, and she spoke in particular of one eight-year-old boy who said in a counseling session that he didn’t know his own father.

“The counselor said it was okay, but I don’t think it’s okay. It’s not okay.”

She said the Legion Family must look after the families of those deployed. “The Legion has to take care of the families. When soldiers are overseas, they’re not concerned about the battles they’re facing there, they’re concerned about the battles their families are facing at home,”

Rowan outlined other ways the Legion can help service people including job fairs for when they get home, and “setting a patriotic example for the nation’s children.”

Rohan, who is from Verona, said, “We are family,”

Continued on Page 2

Hometown hero comes home

Leo Thorsness, Minnesota’s only living Medal of Honor recipient, came home to a rousing reception with friends, family and school children in little Walnut Grove

By Al Zdon

Whoever said you can never go home again wasn’t in Walnut Grove in early October.

Medal of Honor recipient Leo Thorsness made a triumphal return to his hometown, greeting school children, old friends and community members with equal parts of enthusiasm and love.

Thorsness, a Vietnam War Air Force pilot who earned his Medal of Honor in 1967 just 11 days before he was shot down and captured, spent a hectic two-plus hours in what was the Walnut Grove High School and is now a regional elementary and middle school.

He arrived promptly at 9 a.m. in a convoy of official vehicles and flashing lights.

He and his wife of 63 years, Gaylee, walked hand in hand up the sidewalk into the school, with Leo stopping frequently to greet people, shake hands, laugh and trade some old memories.

One old classmate hugged the war hero and laughed, “The other girls and I used to put gum in your hair.” Thorsness agreed, “They were just terrible to me.”

He was asked if he wanted a golf cart ride up to the school, but he declined, saying, “I think I can make it that far.” Thorsness, 84, is fighting cancer, and it is difficult for him to stand even for short periods.

Inside the school, he was ushered into a large room that had been converted into a museum for Walnut Grove high school, with letter jackets and cheerleader lights.

At 1 p.m., also at 3M Auditorium, there will be a program in the morning in the 3M Auditorium. The program, co-sponsored by the Pearl Harbor Survivors Association, the Fort Snelling Memorial Rifle Guard, the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs and others, will feature music, a video tribute and remarks by retired Brig. Gen. Joseph Kelly.

At 3:30 p.m. Mark Wortman, author of 1941, will discuss events leading up to the Japanese attack.

And at 7 p.m., Dave Kenny, author of Minnesota Goes to War, will talk about the home front.

Admission to the Minnesota Historical Society is free for active duty military and veterans.

On December 8, the World War II History Round Table at the Fort Snelling History Center will hear a talk from Col. John A. Adams, author of The Fighting Defenders of Bataan and Corregidor.

Veterans of the Philippines will discuss the attack of the Japanese at Bataan.

Admission is $5.

The one-hour ceremony, from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. at the History Center on Dec. 7 will be live streamed on the MNHS website: mnhs.org/pearl-harbor event.

Continued on Page 8
Rohan, Nelson speak at Fall Conference

By Chuck Stone and Dennis Lewison

Greetings American Legion Family, Fall is in the air, leaves have changed their color and are falling all around us. The Riders will soon be putting their motorcycles away for the winter but that doesn’t mean we aren’t still out doing all we can to support veterans and their families. Hope to see as many Riders as possible at Fall Conference. Wishing all safe travels and a Happy Thanksgiving.

Chuck Stone, Director MNALR

First District Report

First of all, I would like to congratulate Chuck Stone, a member of the First District ALR and his officers on their election to the MN ALR. I would like to thank Chuck for giving me the honor of installing him as the new MN ALR Director at the ROMP held at Legionville.

Talking about the ROMP, the First District had another good turn out this year. A special thanks to Dave Veluc and his crew for the great meals. Thank you 6th District Director, Paul for setting up the weekend activities.

The First District Legacy Scholarship ride was a big success this year. We had 62 registered participants. We started with a kick off gathering at the Kason Post #333. Leaning from there on Saturday the overnight stay was hosted by the La Crescent Post #595 legion family. A meal was provided and an auction to raise money for the fund. The ride concluded on Sunday with our ending stop at the Eoya American Legion Post #551 for lunch, refreshments and more fund raising events. At the end of the ride we had raised over $3,000. A big thank you goes out to all of the Posts, Auxiliary Units, SAL Squadron who donated. Thank you to the ride committee for all of the time and hard work to set the wheels in motion.

Chapters in the First District have been busy with their own activities which include bike shows, flag lines, fund raising events for other organizations and the dedication of a new Veteran’s memorial. The First District had the honor of escorting the “Quilts of Valor” bus into Albert Lea Post 56 where the quilters presented around 40 quilts to local veterans.

We meet as a district on a quarterly basis. We try to attend events of the chapters in our district. We have a “Rider of the Year” award and we are always looking for ways to raise funds for the American Legion Legacy Scholarship Fund.

Dennis Lewison, First District ALR Director

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Membership Chart

As of October 19, 2016

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<th>District</th>
<th>2017 Goal</th>
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<th>2015</th>
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</table>

At-large | 1,953 | 2,710 | 1,501 | 78.19% | 1,758%

Totals | 77,000 | 77,202 | 53,405 | 69.36% | 54,976%
Endorsements

Stump endorsed for Vice Cdr.

Champlin Post 600 has endorsed William V. Stump Jr. for 8th and 10th District Vice Commander for the coming year.

Stump is a past 10th District Commander, past commander of St. Louis Park Post 282, and past commander of Hopkins Post 320.

At the Department level he was the chairman of the Community Services Committee. He is the judge advocate for the 10th District at this time.

Hill endorsed for Sgt.-at-Arms

Brewster Post 464 and the Nobles County Council have endorsed Ryan Hill for Department Sgt-at-Arms for the 2017-2018 year.

Hill enlisted in the US Navy in February, 1968, and served 4 years on active duty and 2 years in the Reserves. He served on the USS Oriskany, CVA-34, for 4 tours to Vietnam and was discharged on 13 February, 1974.

Hill is a 39 year member of Brewster American Legion Post 464. He helped start the Brewster Sons of the American Legion Squadron and is a 5 year S. AL member there. He served as 2nd District Commander in 2015-2016, 2nd District 1st Vice Commander in 2014-2015, 2nd District Vice Commander from 2012-2014 and is currently 2nd District Legislation Chairman.

Hill served on the SDSP soybean crush plant at Volga South Dakota for 14 years, 9 of those years as Public Relations Chairman. He then served as an advisor to the MsSP start-up at Brewster Minnesota.

Hill and his wife Naomi have two children and two grandchildren. He has farmed in the Brewster area all his adult life.

Minnesota Boys Stater is Samsung winner

James Libbey of St. Michael has been named one of Samsung’s American Legion Scholars for this year and will be the recipient of a $20,000 Samsung scholarship.

Libbey attended Minnesota Boys State this past spring. He was sponsored by St. Louis Park Post 282.

At Boys State, he won the Samsung Scholarship contest and automatically qualified for the national scholarship.

He will be able to use the money for school expenses for six years from the time he graduates from high school, excluding time in the service or church missions.

The money can be used for tuition, room and board, books and supplies, fees and equipment.

All Samsung winners will be honored during a recognition event in Washington D.C. scheduled for June 5-7 this coming year.

Only a handful of Department scholarship winners earn the $20,000 scholarship at the national level.

Libbey is a senior at Benilde St. Margaret.

A Girls State delegate was also a finalist for the top award and earned a $750 scholarship. Sophia Peterson of Orono attended the 2016 Girls State program and won the Minnesota Samsung competition.

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Mail Call

Great Organization To the Editor: Just read through reading my August 2016 issue of the Minnesota Legionnaire newspaper. Was sad to learn of the still steadily declining membership and subsequent annual dues increase. The cost of running the magazine and newspaper are not going down so the increase is justified. This of course would not be happening if the veterans who came home from the military service in the past twenty years would join an organization as great as The American Legion. I hope they remember this when the politicians start taking care of their own but not the veterans that have served and protected our country and its colors and clear, fresh air are wonderful. It is a time to count our blessings, be thankful for all that we have: family, friends and to live in a country that I still believe in and love.

Tom Dohal
Apple Valley

Half-staff Overdue To the Editor: I couldn’t agree more about the overdue of ordering the flag flown at half-staff. It is the meaning of the honor when everyone is honored. It is like the participation awards for most youth (and some adult) activities where effort, merit, and outstanding achievement are meaningless. It is also like the routine use of the standing ovation; every performance is now deemed worthy of what was intended as an extra effort for those who do not feel it justified are chastised for not joining in. Or grade inflation in school and university.

On the other hand, now that it has been established by usage, any president or governor who doesn’t order it lapses into inaction. Like the Apostle Paul, we can be thankful for the many reasons Paul gave thanks for the people in his life. We give of our time and money to the Legion and other charities. And for all the wonderful things God does in our lives, we give thanks.

In the Bible, the apostle Paul begins nine of his thirteen epistles recorded in the New Testament with phrases like this one: “First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you” (Romans 1:8). At the church in Rome he was thankful for their increase in faith, in Corinth, it was for the grace given to them; at Ephesus, it was for their love and attention they gave to other believers; at Philippis, it was their partnership in the gospel they had with Paul; and at Thessalonica, it was for their work and labor for Christ. Paul was thankful through God for people, and all the wonderful things God was doing. As we Legionnaires praise in this life we are compt with the truly great and good in our daily lives, in our possessions and ourselves. We do this for all our service members serving today and for those who served before them through the sacrifice of service members. We do this for us. Like the Apostle Paul, we can be thankful for the many reasons Paul gave thanks for the people in his life. We give of our time and money to the Legion and other charities. And for all the wonderful things God does in our lives, we give thanks.

J.G.G. Kahn Sr.
Etowa

Uncommon Valor To the Editor: Paul: After the last shot were fired on Iwo Jima, and before leaving battalion headquarters, we went over to where the Graves Division had erected white crosses marking the locations of those killed. Those who paid the final price were sealed in body bags in a wooden coffin, where, lying in wait for a time after a war when they would all be brought home to their families and loved ones.

In the meantime, from high on top of Mt. Suribachi, our nation’s flag of 48 stars, that silent sentinel of freedom, the soul of our nation, continued to wave from the mountain top. For many who had cheered and waved at it, they would never see another flag.

Veterans Day has always been an important day in The American Legion. It is a time we remember and honor all those who served in our country and the way of life. It is quite busy with all the meal preparations, parades and speeches that it is easy to forget those that are less visible. Once a veteran, always a veteran. Remember to thank them.

We have had several revitalizations already this year and many more are scheduled for the upcoming months. I know that the 5th District is planning a revitalization from 17-19 November at the Richfield Post. Do not hesitate to call Mark Dvorak, our membership director or myself if you wish to conduct one in your post, county or district.

The monthly October luncheon will be attended by many membership dinners, committee meetings, deer hunting at Camp Ripley and Legionville, Fall meetings at National Headquarters. I know we will never tire of waving the Marine Corps Flag for Indepenence Day! I learn something new about all of our wonderful programs and can’t wait to share with others. It takes many hours of volunteering time to fulfill our purpose.

I would like to take this time to extend to you all a very happy Thanksgiving. My favorite season is the fall. The colors and weather are wonderful. It is a time to count our blessings, be thankful for all that we have: family, friends and to live in a country that I still believe in and love.

Tom Dohal
Apple Valley

Corrections

A story in the October issue incorrectly listed the title for Eric Grundhauser as the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs. He is Special Advisor on Ending Veterans Homelessness.

A photo in a prior issue of the Legionnaire incorrectly listed the name of a member receiving a 60-year certificate at Oklee Post 159. His name is Elmer Hanson.

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What's Happening

**WWII GI Bill vets**
A Harvard researcher is doing a study on veterans who used the GI Bill following World War II. He is seeking veterans who used the bill, particularly in the 1946-48 time period. If you would like to contribute, contact Talpey Hitt at abhit@college.harvard.edu.

**Yarn sought**
A volunteer who knits for Treats for Troops is seeking yarn to continue his efforts. If you would like to contribute, contact Mona Longin at longtjin@frontiernet.net.

**Shop, Ship and Share**
The Fourth of July will sponsor Shop, Ship and Share Day. It will be held at the Maplewood Mall on Friday, Dec. 2, and Saturday, Dec. 3, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. with a program on Saturday at 2. There will be postal services available to ship packages, purchase stamps and other postal supplies. Items can be donated or money can be donated. Donations can be sent to Fourth District, Packages for the Military, Box 17035, St. Paul, MN 55117-0035.

**100 Memorials**
Cities that have World War I memorials can apply for a grant of up to $2,000 in the 100 Cities/100 Memorials project sponsored by the WWI Centennial Commission, the World War I Military Museum and Library, and the American Legion. Grants can be used to restore the memorials to their original quality. For more information, go to the project’s website: wwi1cc.org/100memorials.

**Fargo VA documentary**
The Fargo VA will present “Unseen Soldier” on Nov. 10 at 3:30 p.m in the Third Floor Auditorium. It will be followed by a moderated panel discussion. The documentary features footage of battles fought by an Oklahoma Guard Unit deployed to Afghanistan in 2011. A member of the unit will be on hand.

**Linden Grove Apartments**
The Linden Grove Apartments in St. Cloud are now open for occupancy. The community has a priority for veterans who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. The apartments are affordable and permanent. For information, contact Sand Property Management, 320-258-3400.

**Holiday Party**
The Gen. John Pershing Chapter of the Association of the United States Army will be having its annual wounded warrior holiday party at the Polytrauma Unit at the Minneapolis VA Medical Center. It is for wounded veterans and their families. Each hero receives a gift bag worth $400. Donations are accepted. Contact Cintia Rivas, AUSA, 3459 Washington Drive, Suite 208, Eagan, MN 55122.

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**Wolfsteller on TV**
KARE-11 in the Twin Cities will be doing a news feature on service members who were discharged with a less than honorable discharge that could have been related to PTSD or TBI. The American Legion has been in the forefront of helping veterans get an upgrade in their discharge if warranted.

**Part of the news show will be an interview with Department Service Officer Jeremy Wolfsteller. The program will air on Veterans Day.**

**Legal Clinic**
A free drop-in legal clinic will be held Tuesday, Nov. 15, at the Minneapolis VA Medical Center in the Flag Atrium Balcony Room. It will be held from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. There is free parking also.

**Caregiver Celebration**
The St. Cloud VA Medical Center will host a “celebration of caregivers” education and resource fair in the Auditorium, Building 8, at the medical center on Nov. 18 from 9:30 a.m. until 2 p.m.

**Yarn sought**
A volunteer who knits for Treats for Troops is seeking yarn to continue his efforts. If you would like to contribute, contact Talpey Hitt at abhit@college.harvard.edu.

**Adams the author of a book on the battles. There will also be various workshops throughout the day including PTSD and families, memory loss activities, traumatic brain injury, caregiver support, grief counseling, and resource fair and suicide prevention.**

For information, contact 320-252-1670, extension 7283.

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**Karnas, George James,** 86, veteran of the Korean War, died Oct. 19, 2016. He was very active in American Legion Baseball as a coach and director since and served as a captain for many years. He was a past commander of Richfield Post 435.

**Ellison, John,** 87, Navy veteran of the Korean War, died Oct. 12, 2016. He was a member of Thief River Falls Post 117.

**Bisher, Robert A.** 70, Navy veteran of the Vietnam War, died Sept. 12, 2016. He also served in and retired from the Army. He was a “hard hat” diver in the Navy and received the recommendation for clearing the Suez Canal. He was a member of Rice Post 473.

**Stangel, Herman F.** 84, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Oct. 16, 2016. He served in the Korean conflict. His service is free but registration is preferred. 701-2390, 3700 extension 94311.

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“Oh, my gosh, Bill, look!”
A tearful Judy Stein held up a plaque naming her late husband Bill Stein as Legionnaire of the Year toward heaven. It was presented by the Sons of the American Legion. SAL Commander Gene Otswold presented the award which recognized Bill Stein’s many years of service to the SAL. He died this year.

Virginia Nelson, National Vice President of the Auxiliary, Northwest Division, spoke on Saturday at the Fall Conference. She is from Nebraska.

Fall Conference in Marshall

Plaques were awarded to Rep. Bob Dettmer, R-Forest Lake, and Rep. Tim Walz, DFL-Minn., for their work in helping veterans. Neither could attend since they were on the campaign trail. Legislative Chairs Donna Arends and Peggy Moon showed off the plaques.

Denise Rohan of Wisconsin, the leading candidate for National Commander, was the other featured speaker on Saturday morning at the joint session.

Vice Commander Harley Wahl led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance to open the conference.

Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs Commissioner Larry Shellito spoke on Friday.
Outstanding Guard and Reserve honored

SFC TERRY CLABO
Hutchinson
Army National Guard
A Co., 334 BEB
Nominated by
Hutchinson Post 96

HM1 DANIEL DONNDELINGER
Inver Grove Heights
Navy Reserve
Op Support Center
Nominated by
Univ. of MN Post 548

MSGT DEVIN DURYEE
Apple Valley
Air Force Nat’l Guard
133rd Airlift Wing
Nominated by
Wold Chamberlin Post 99

MSGT CLINT HAMANN
Cannon Falls
Air Force Reserve
934th Airlift Wing
Nominated by
Univ. of MN Post 548

The Second District took first place in membership percentage announced at the conference. From left: Denise Milton, District Membership Director Mike Schaffer, District Commander Mark Coney and Membership Director Mark Dvorak.

A print showing a tractor for handicapped hunters was auctioned off and Garylee Davenport had the top bid of $250 from the Seventh District and Spicer Post 545. He then donated the print to the Department Headquarters office.

President Kottom and Commander Milton were the final grouping at the Grand March of The American Legion Family.

Girls State Senator Hannah Hendrickson of Moorhead told the Fall Conference of her experiences at Girls Nation in Washington D.C.

Department Service Officer Jeremy Wolfsteller gave a talk on veterans whose discharge may have been affected by PTSD.

Chuck Stone, chair of the Pheasant Dinner Fund, presented Department President Carol Kottom a check for $10,000 for the Auxiliary.

During Saturday’s joint session, SAL Membership Director Cliff Teigland, Department Membership Director Mark Dvorak and Auxiliary Membership Chair Zandra Kessler all gathered at the podium at the Red Baron Arena.

National Commander Candidate Denise Rohan and Department Commander Denise Milton pose with the awareness walk banner outside the Marshall Post.
Continued from Page 1

leader outfits hanging from the walls amid hundreds of pictures. Thorsness looked around, but said he couldn’t remember the room. Others seemed to have trouble passing down its past use also, one saying it was a library, another a study hall and another said it was an English classroom. It may have been all those things at one time or another.

Thorsness graduated from Walnut Grove High School in 1950. He talked about his early years as friends gathered around him in the history room.

Soon, though, he made his way the 100 feet or so across the hall to an even larger room that he did remember well, the gymnasium. The room was filled with perhaps 200 grade school and middle school children and the school band.

The band bravely struck up “The Halls of Montezuma” and finished with “Anchors Aweigh.” They may have gotten to the Air Force song, but the program was about to start.

Thorsness settled into a red, padded office chair that the principal assured him was the most comfortable chair in the school. He sat just a few feet from the kids, and began his story.

“I grew up on the farm, but then we moved into town and I had to prove myself all over again. When I lived on the farm, I actually used to ride a horse to school every day. “I wasn’t a great student, but I loved to play sports. I played on every team they had. I really liked sports. Later on, I can’t say my time here helped me academically, but it did improve my motor skills.

“And I spent a lot of time out on Plum Creek fishing.” Walnut Grove and Plum Creek were the settings for Laura Ingalls Wilder who wrote the popular “Little House” pioneer books — in particular the book “On the Banks of Plum Creek.” It was later a television series.

After high school, Thorsness went on to South Dakota State College at Brookings where he met Gaylee. He later chose the military and became a fighter pilot. “Then Vietnam came along, and that was my war.”

He became part of an Air Force group flying out of Thailand that would attack the surface-to-air missile batteries that were becoming lethal to U.S. pilots over North Vietnam. The Air Force unit was called the Wild Weasels. In those days, you had to fly 100 missions to go home. I was on my 93rd mission, and I probably shouldn’t have flown that day. I got shot down and spent the next six years as a prisoner of war.”

Talking to the school children and later in his talks to the press and the community, Thorsness probably didn’t say 25 words about an earlier mission where he earned the Medal of Honor. He talked at length, though, about getting shot down and becoming a prisoner of war.

“That day we were flying along at 700 miles an hour and we took a missile right up our tailpipe. I told the other man in the plane to eject and so did I. It was probably the right move because two seconds later the plane exploded.”

Thorsness summed up his prisoner experience as being two equal parts, three years of brutality and torture, and three years of boredom.

Much of his early time in prison was spent in solitary confinement in a five-by-six-foot cell.

He said in the latter three years, he got a letter now and then. “Including my tour or flying in Vietnam, I was gone for seven years. All this time, my wife had to be on her own raising our daughter. I didn’t see my daughter from the time she was 11 until she was 18. Gaylee did a phenomenal job. For me, raising a teenager was not a bother.”

The kids, and the questions were read from note cards.

Another question was on why he became a pilot.

He talked at length about how long the wait was in the confines of a cell, and about how he felt he was being treated as a prisoner of war.

Thorsness said he was down to about 110 pounds at one time, and even though he was malnourished and had to start feeding them sugar toward the end to fatten them up, he said almost all the prisoners were scrawny. Thorsness told the kids that he didn’t think about becoming a pilot because they had never seen a zipper before.

He talked at length about how long the wait was in the confines of a cell, and how he felt he was being treated as a prisoner of war.

The youngsters then had the chance to ask their home-town hero questions. The teachers had worked with the kids, and the questions were read from note cards. Thorsness sometimes had trouble hearing the little voices, but he never gave up until he understood the question.

One question was on how he felt to be released from the Hanoi Hilton.

“I felt mighty good. It was just joy. But as they flew us into an Air Force base in the Philippines, we really weren’t sure how we’d be received. We’d been prisoners for a long time, and we wanted to give the enemy anything but name, rank and serial number. But when you’re tor-tured, you tend to say more than that. We didn’t know what they knew of us.”

When the plane touched down, though, there was a military band. “This was a good sign that we’d be treated well.”

Thorsness said he was down to about 110 pounds at one point in captivity, and even though the North Vietnamese had begun feeding them sugar toward the end to fatten them up, he said almost all the prisoners were scrawny.

That was the way the young Air Force people we just stared at them. We said, ‘Boy, you’re fat.’ ”

One part of coming home, he said, was the new appreci-

ation for American ideals. “Civilizations come and go. As all of us came home, we came to appreciate the freedom America has. We are a very blessed people. We sometimes take that for granted.”

Another question was on why he became a pilot.

That’s the best job in the world. Why wouldn’t anyone want to be a fighter pilot? Going supersonic, screaming over the rice paddies at 20 feet off the deck at 700 miles per hour, trying to avoid a missile. And if it doesn’t hit you, that’s fun.”

How about ejecting from the fighter? “My knees and back were hurt during the ejection. I couldn’t walk. I was captured 15 minutes after I hit the ground. They wanted me to walk, but I couldn’t. Finally, they put me in a net and car-

ried me off to their village.”

Leo Thorsness enjoys a few hours back in his childhood hometown at Walnut Grove, Minnesota.

The yearbook in its predictions section didn’t quite nail that Thorsness would become a jet fighter pilot.

Walnut Grove city park will be renamed for Thorsness.

Thorsness told of the huge culture shock of going from flying a technologically advanced airplane to being wound-
ed in a hut in this village. “It was just abject poverty. These people didn’t have anything. Some of them were smoking dope. When they took off my flight suit, they were amazed because they had never seen a zipper before.

Leo and Gaylee met with Thorsness’ old friends.

Thorsness spoke to the elementary and middle school children in his hometown of Walnut Grove.

At left is Thorsness’ picture from his 1950 year-

book at Walnut Grove. At top is a homecoming but-

ton from his senior year.

Hometown hero goes home again
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The children were gone, and about 200 neighbors had taken a trip from the history room back to the gymnasium. But now it was time to talk to his hometown brethren. Again, it was short of life just overflowed into the people around him.

describe his having to wear the crown as a true American elite club in America.

It seemed that some had become a little, how to say it, full of themselves. Others seemed to have adopted it.

And he never seemed more joyful than when he had a tarp.

Wherever he went that morning, that joy and abundance of life just overflowed into the people around him. And he never seemed more joyful than when he had a tarp.

Continued on Page 11

Thorsness, with Gaylee by his side, was presented the Medal of Honor by President Nixon in 1973.

The next section of the morning was a 20-minute session with the press — about half dozen local newspaper people gathered around a table in the history room.

He asked each reporter where they were from. One said he was from Sanborn, and Thorsness’ face lit up. “Watermelon Days,” he said. “My dad would always take us over there. Those were great days to be a kid!”

Thorsness was told by one of the reporters that Walnut Grove now has a very large Hmong population, and that many of the Hmong risked their lives to rescue American pilots during the Vietnam War. Thorsness said he knew that. He spoke of his days milking cows and then selling the milk on a neighborhood route. “It was so wholesome here. These kids growing up here have got to love what they have. It’s not south Chicago. They have all this opportunity. We are so blessed.”

What are his favorite memories of growing up in Walnut Grove?

“Heading with my friends. There was a farmer living south of town who had one old horse who was ready to die. The horse was blind. My father knew this farmer well, and we used to hunt ducks at his pond. One day the farmer asked if I thought that young Leo, me, could come over and shoot the horse and put him out of his misery. My father said that shouldn’t be a problem, and he asked me to do it.

“I was with my best friend, Bud Schultz, and we headed over to this farmer’s pond with our shotguns to get some ducks. I didn’t tell Bud anything about shooting the horse. We didn’t get any ducks, and on the way back we went by this horse. I said to Bud, ‘I wonder what it would be like to shoot a horse?’ He looked at me and I was crazy. ‘I took my shotgun off my shoulder and aimed it at the horse and pulled the trigger. It was a big horse and it went down like a ton of bricks. I looked at Bud and said, ‘What did we do? Let’s get the heck out of here. They’re going to arrest us and put us in jail!’ We ran all the way back to town.

“I didn’t tell Bud the truth for about a week. I just kept saying how ‘we’ were in trouble. Finally I let him in on it.”

Leo Thorsness talked with people from the community who turned out to meet their favorite son.

During his visit to Walnut Grove, it was announced that the city park would be named after Thorsness.

The word “activities” drew a laugh from the audience. “I didn’t do anything illegal or immoral, just the usual kid’s stuff.”

Leo Thorsness talked with people from the community who turned out to meet their favorite son.

During his visit to Walnut Grove, it was announced that the city park would be named after Thorsness.

Thorsness, with Gaylee by his side, was presented the Medal of Honor by President Nixon in 1973.

Sandy Alcorn, a high school friend, presented Thorsness with a stool made from the original bleachers in the gymnasium. He joked that Thorsness had spent a lot of time on the wood watching others play.

The visit over, Leo and Gaylee walked back to the waiting motorcycle.
Leo Thorsness talked to different groups about a variety of topics. His first visit to Takhli Air Base in Thailand in 1967. He had been a fighter pilot for many years, racking up over 5,000 hours of flight time. He was 35 years old.

The Vietnam War brought him overseas for combat. At Takhli, he was assigned to a group called the Wild Weasels, whose primary mission was to knock out the Soviet-provided surface-to-air-missile sites in North Vietnam that were providing anti-aircraft fire.

The Wild Weasels by that time in war were using the F-105 Thunderchief, known by the pilots as a “Thud,” to find and destroy the SAM sites. The fighter was well armored, very fast and used the latest electronics. It also was not maneuverable as the smaller Soviet MiGs that it often faced.

The pilot sat in front and the Electronic Warfare Officer, often called a “backseater,” was just behind. Capt. Harold John Thorsness was backseater.

The idea was to aggressively attack an enemy position, and the pilots were known as “Killer Thuds.” The enemy radar and locked in, the Thud could also electronically “see” the SAM site. The trouble was, both sides could each see the other. The Wild Weasel had the capability of destroying the missile site before it could destroy them.

And, quite often, the 105s had to fend off the enemy’s MiG fighter jets.

It was dangerous work, and many Wild Weasel crews went down. The one thing he didn’t talk about very much was the evacuations.

On April 19, 1967, Thorsness only had a handful of missions left before he and Johnson reached the magic number of 100. The two planes were able to get out of the area, but seconds after they got out of the area, the Wild Weasel attacked usually had four planes: one converted 105F, with all the special electronics and special bombs, and three 105Ds, the original fighter version, as wingmen.

But more of the converted 105Fs were coming on line.

Harry and I came up with the idea of having two Weasels in our flight, he explained. The two Weasels would fly a rendezvous. The improvised scheme worked, and all four MiGs were killed.

Thorsness radioed: “Tanker 1, you have six minutes to make it happen. He brought the Thud up to 35,000 feet and made it happen. He brought the 35,000 feet and made it happen. He brought the 35,000 feet and made it happen. He brought the 35,000 feet and made it happen. He brought the 35,000 feet and made it happen. He brought the 35,000 feet and made it happen. He c...
The Minnesota American Legion Family House was host to two new members and changed its bylaws at the annual meeting last month. Albert-Marth-Wohlfel, New Ulm, was elected to the Board of Directors, and Sharon Thiemecke, Bemidji, was elected to the Executive Committee. Bemidji served on the Legislative Committee, and were Marth defeated Reuben Nalazek of Chisago. Leaving the board will be Marland Ronning, 10th District, and Jan Walker, 10th District. Their departure was part of a change in how board members were elected. The new rules say only two people can serve from any one district. Leading up to the meeting there were four members from the 10th District. The change didn’t come easily.

Ronning read and moved the resolution that called for the two-per-district rule — excluding the automatic positions on the board to the three organizations. Two members opposed the board, Dennis Nick and Nicki Nickel, immediately spoke against the resolution saying that the board had no prior knowledge that it would be brought up at this meeting.

It was defeated on a voice vote. Linda Propenke, however, after asking the Judge Advocate Tom Lannon for a ruling, moved the exact wording from the floor. It was passed.

Marie Goede, president of the American Legion Riders, said the Legion is trying to help veterans who received a less-than-honorable discharge due to PTSD rea.

The Marine pilots, we didn’t even bother to teach them to talk code. The Navy pilots could get up to 15 words a minute. The Army pilots could only get about six words. The prisoners had to listen to the language very well, and so they would say, “Here are the

Thorsness
Continued from Page 9
days or so, the guards would have the prisoners strip naked and go outside leaving everything in the cell. The guards would then hunt through the prisoner’s clothing, bedding and meager possessions looking for contraband.

“We told Mike that no matter how tough he was, he couldn’t keep that flag. But he didn’t listen.” The North Vietnam found the ragged Star Spangled Banner.

The beating started in the morning and continued through mid-day. It was brutal, it was terrible. When he came back to the cell, he couldn’t talk. He couldn’t talk for a week.

But the first thing he did when he could move his fingers was to find another scrap of cloth and begin another flag.

“When I see people not respecting the flag...” He told the story about how he learned he had been nominated for the Medal of Honor about two years into his captivity. He had had a “code” or “tap code,” a Morse code-like communication that could move from cell wall to cell wall.

And when how he finally got home, the government warned him not to talk about it, not to tell anyone of the dealing with the prisoners. He didn’t know who these guys were, and they wanted to make sure he didn’t get it again. “There were 350 prisoners, and about seven of them became collaborators with the enemy. They didn’t know who these guys were, and they wanted make sure they didn’t give the medal to a collaborator. They might have lost their jobs. None of all, he’s Norwegian.”

The crowd laughed heartily.

“In the end it was approved, but I’m the only person who got the Medal of Honor who had to go through the system twice.”

Besides the tap code, the prisoners also had to listen to the enemy’s version of the news. “They didn’t understand the language very well, and so they would say, ‘Here are the news’ if they only had one item, they’d say, ‘Here is the new.’

“They’d always give us all the bad stuff. If 20 people had been killed in a flood, they’d say it was 20,000. In the casual-

Reports they gave us, they killed off the whole American army about three times. They told us about every anti-war protest we’d ever had.”

“But at least we got some news.”

The tap code could mean anything. He learned the meanings of the words the Interrogators would use, and what the

He said the prisoners got better and better at the code, which consisted of the arrangements of the letters in the grid of 25, five by five, eliminating the letter K. “The Air Force guys could get up to 15 words a minute. The Navy pilots could maybe do ten words a minute.”

“Marine pilots, we’d learn even to bother to teach them the tap code.”

Thorsness went into some additional detail about the ordeal of getting shot down that he hadn’t told the kids.

“Before we were hit, we reported there were MiGs in the area. But we got a radio message back from the F-4 Phantom’s that were supposed to protect us. ‘Have no fear, we’re here.”

The American fighters’ help, though, didn’t prevent the missile strike on Thorsness’ F-105 Thunderchief. “Harry and I had talked it over beforehand that if I ever said, ‘Go' he was to eject immediately. There would be no time to hese.

So with the stick flapping around in my hand, I said ‘Go’ and he said ‘Shit.’ And then he was gone.”

What did the years in prison teach him, one of the local people asked. “I learned I was an average guy. In fact there was no more average than I was. You learned yourself. You learned who you are.

“i came out of the camp a better person, but maybe not six years better.”

The day finally came to be released, he said there was a lot of suspense among the Americans. “We wondered if it was a trick. They took us to the airport and put us in a hangar and gave us warm beer. That was a good sign.”

Finally the American transport plane showed up. “We were helped on the plane by the best looking nurses in the world. But you have to understand that we had not seen a female for six years.”

“When the plane broke ground, that was it. We finally knew we were going home.”

Thorsness had talked for about 45 minutes, leaning on the podium in the middle of the gym. But the welcome home was not over as dozens lined up to get a book signed, shake his hand, or share some experience from the past.

The hero leaned hard on the podium through it all, but the smile he had never left his face, nor the joy from his countenance. He was home again.

And then it was back to the long sidewalk for the walk to the waiting cars. Again he refused the cart.

He strolled slowly down the walk, hand in hand with Gaylee.
Greetings Mighty 7th.

Hope that everyone is doing well. October has been a very busy month. I attended two 7th District Membership Rally's. The first Rally was held in Montevideo on October 1st and the second was in Glenwood on October 5th where there were more in attendance. I would like to say "Thank You" to the Montevideo & Glenwood Posts for hosting the Rally’s. If anyone would like to attend one of your post meeting, please feel free to give me a call.

We are in the process of setting up dates to do area revitalizations, so if you are interested in doing one, you can call me or my Membership Director Richard Wog.

A big thank you to Marshall Post 113 for hosting the Department Fall Conference. Hopefully everyone had an enjoyable time, a fun learning experience and gained some knowledge from this event.

The 7th is cut off. Day 4 place. Keep up the good work and look towards 1st place. I know we can do it. I have faith in you.

And last, but not least, Membership, Membership, Membership.

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Legionnaires November 2016

First District
Sylvan Fix

Second District
Mark Coney

Third District
Mike Maxa

Fourth District
Randy Bystrow

Fifth District
Ray Eiden

Sixth District
Vernonica Fernlund

Seventh District
Gary Lee Davenport

Tenth District
Bonnie Hanson

Ninth District
Eric Wilkins

District Commanders

SF

October was another fun and busy month. My thanks to all those who helped our Fall Americanism/ Membership Rally October 1st. We started out the day with bowling for about two hours with the kids. This included some moments of fun, some where we always seem to add a little spark of excitement and fun. We then started the meeting and talked about several of the programs within American Legion where we program went well. Thanks to La Crescent Post for hosting our Fall Conference October 15th and the wonderful steak fry afterwards. Since Junior shadowing was a major project for the year we had our Junior Sports Chairman Michael Toban provide us with a demonstration of a rifle and target and fill us in on financial or other obligations there may be. Get out and vote and have a Great Veterans Day. God Bless.

November has quickly arrived as we see cooler temperatures. The deer are dropping off the trees, the harvest is well under way, and there has even been frost reported in the area. November is a very important month this year. First, in just a matter of days we will be heading to the polls to elect a new President and all the way down to the local City Hall and Commissioners. Please exercise your right and duty to vote this year. We are fortunate to live in a country where we have such liberties as the right to vote without the fear of retribution. So please, get out and vote on Nov. 8th.

On Veteran’s Day we will take time to remember and say “Thank You” to all veterans both young and old. Those who are alive, and those who have given the ultimate sacrifice to protect our freedom including those who have not returned or been accounted for. That is what makes this country so great. It is in the time like this that we remember why we do what we feel was right and to protect our way of life. Let us not forget our veterans on November 11th. Please keep those veterans close to your heart and in your prayers. Finally, we will celebrate Thanksgiving where we give thanks for many things. The families will come together and catch up on distant relatives. If you plan on traveling for Thanksgiving, please be safe.

I would like to welcome the third chapter in the Second District of the American Legion Riders. This has been in the making for a few years, but now it is a reality. The chapter is very much scheduled to be based in either Rock or Pipestone counties but will encompass the Southwest area of the state. This is open to all Legion Family members who want to bond with other Legion family members. If you would like to join, feel free to contact me at (507) 669-2006.

Thank you for everything that you do and have a safe November.

November is great time to check to see if your website is up to date. Especially, if you are planning on using your Fall Americanism/ Membership Rally for the 100 year anniversary? Please do, we would love to have the Legion family will grow.

Greetings from the Roaring Ninth. As we enter November we have put a few big milestones behind us such as the 55% target, the Kaisersatt Derby, and the infamous leg up the 6th and 7th.

Unfortunately, the 9th will keep the leg down although it was a close contest this year. November will bring another goal with 60% target on November 16th. Second membership notices have been sent and I hope all Posts are seeing more renewals coming in. November is extending as recruiting new members.

Our weakest demographic is those veterans who have served from the Gulf War to today. I encourage each member of the Legion to recruit one new member this year. Just think how many we could gain with that simple goal. I have already recruited 3 new Legion and 3 SAL members this year so I know it can be done.

November also brings three additional important events, Election Day, Veterans Day and Thanksgiving. Regardless of your stance, I encourage everyone to vote as there is plenty at stake in all levels of government.

I also encourage everyone to take part in a Veterans Day event and remind our communities the important role veterans play. Then take time from the hustle and bustle of life and spend some time thanking for all we have in this great country.

Until next month, keep doing the great things you do for The American Legion and fellow veterans.

When you read this we will have finished up at Fall Conference in Marshall. Hope we have many new members that are coming to see how we as the American Legion are getting the message out about who we are and what we are about.

Please bring this Leadership back to your Post. Membership is what we need to continue in. We just finished up with our first revitalization of the year. First I want to thank Cambridge for having us in their Post to do the call. Then to the volunteers that helped make the calls and then a big one for the District’s Membership Chairman Paul Orson. We will be having another one in early February want to thank the St. Cloud VA and the Minneapolis VA for the invitations for the Pheasants and Luchandon and how tasty they were.

I have a Veterans Day coming up where we honor all Veterans living and those that have given their lives so we can be free.

We have the Rallies both in the Department and Districts. We are working hard on getting those membership in, calling the members that sign up on-line and ones that haven’t paid for the last couple years. Most of the time they do want to talk with someone.

Remember motto is “Family First.” Hope to see you all down the line.

Thank you for everything that you do and have a safe November.

I am sure you are looking forward to the start of the holiday season. I know I am. I have received several generous donations for our District project. The project is to raise funds for a passenger golf cart in the golf cart that is for our veterans who have donated. We have been bouncing near the top for membership.

Keep “pouring” in the membership to keep us floating on top. Saturday November 19, 2016 the 6th District will have a holiday membership rally at the Brainerd American Legion Post 255 starting at 5:00 pm.

Enjoy the holiday season, I heard Santa might even attend.

Post 255 starting at 5:00 pm. Everyone is welcome, I heard they even have a Frosty the Snowman. The Awards Banquet will be held at 6:30 pm. If you have a dinner or an event happening at your post, please provide information to your local newspaper.

During the conference in Marshall, the 6th District received the “Leg” award at the 6th & 9th District Membership rally. Congratulations to all the members of the 6th District for the outstanding job for the 2016 membership year so I know it can be done.

Thank you all for this opportunity to serve the Fabulous Fourth.

Happy Thanksgiving!

— Commander
Four of those fought in the European war, and two of them, the 82nd and the 101st, became well known because of their roles in the Normandy landings. Operation Market Garden and the Battle of the Bulge.

One paratrooper division that went to fight the other war was the 11th Airborne. Gerard Devlin, author of Paratrooper, and veteran Victor Liptrap of World War II, told us about the 11th Airborne.

*Gerard Devlin, author of Paratrooper, and veteran Victor Liptrap of World War II, told us about the 11th Airborne.*

The Japanese had interred thousands of civilians in camps on Luzon, and the largest was at a college campus in Los Banos, about 40 miles from Manila. On Feb. 21, a platoon of paratroopers secured a landing zone near the camp.

On the morning of the 23rd, B Company of 511th dropped into the landing zone while the platoon that had already secured the camp attacked the Japanese. At the same time, an amphibious assault was made from a nearby lake using the battalion's other parts. The 11th Airborne advanced down a highway leading to the camp and prevented Japanese counter measures.

By three in the afternoon, the Airborne forces withdrew, having freed over 2,000 civilians prisoners. It was one of the most successful raids of the war.

The division was then on to taking on the entrenched Japanese south of Luzon, which they did.

The last Japanese forces on Luzon were now in the north, and as the Army drove to reach them, a team of the 511th was dropped on June 21 on the other side of the Japanese stronghold, and began advancing south.

They linked up with the other American divisions three days later. It was the last combat action for the division in the war.

"The 511th fought as long and as hard as any infantry division in Europe, but how many books do you read about the Battle for Manila?" Devlin said. "It was, 'Good bye mama, I've off to Yokohama.'"

Later the division served up north on the island of Hokkaido. It went back to the United States in 1949.

Victor Liptrap grew up in Wichita, Kansas, and when he was 17 years old, "I wounded a Japanese, I think it was a flier, on my birthday," he told the Round Table. "It was my first taste of combat."

Liptrap's Company F was part of the 11th Airborne, along with the 1st Cavalry Division.

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"The 511th fought as long and as hard as any infantry division in Europe, but how many books do you read about the Battle for Manila?" Devlin said. "It was, 'Good bye mama, I've off to Yokohama.'"

Later the division served up north on the island of Hokkaido. It went back to the United States in 1949.

V

Victor Liptrap grew up in Wichita, Kansas, and when he was 17 years old, "I wounded a Japanese, I think it was a flier, on my birthday," he told the Round Table. "It was my first taste of combat."

Liptrap's Company F was part of the 11th Airborne, along with the 1st Cavalry Division.

On the morning of the 23rd, B Company of 511th dropped into the landing zone while the platoon that had already secured the camp attacked the Japanese. At the same time, an amphibious assault was made from a nearby lake using the battalion's other parts. The 11th Airborne advanced down a highway leading to the camp and prevented Japanese counter measures.

By three in the afternoon, the Airborne forces withdrew, having freed over 2,000 civilians prisoners. It was one of the most successful raids of the war.

The division was then on to taking on the entrenched Japanese south of Luzon, which they did.

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V
Greetings from the American Legion Auxiliary – It's my privilege and a pleasure for me to get to present our newest unit, Bruno (out of my own 10th District), with their charter. The Legislogues attended along with 2016-17 President Dawnie Juhel and Department Secretary Sandie.

Let's see if we can get a few more going this year. Bruno has been working very hard on getting an active Junior group together. Gotta love it.

Thanks to Barnsville, Rosetown and Brainerd for the invitations to your events. President Jeannette Kava invited neighboring units to a luncheon and I had a great time visiting with them. It was fun to share my project and answer questions for those attending.

Lea Wright County Vice Commander has vowed that he is going to get the Post, Unit and SAL all to their goals. How about your Legionnaires? Are they out there working members for you?

Wright County Vice Commander Bonnie Hanson, 10th District President Linda Deschenes, myself and a bunch more members held a “learn to crochet” class. The concept is that the Juniors can make a baby blanket for the Honorary 10th District President Megan Bruzek’s project. What a fun afternoon!

Mary Davis, our National President, had her homecoming in Seattle in October. Although I had a little trouble getting around, I did attend and enjoyed being there. Sadly, our membership is not doing as well as I hoped. Buffalo’s Post Commander, Robert Larson, who is also the Wright County Vice Commander, has vowed that he is going to get the Post, Unit and SAL all to their goals. How about your Legislogues? Are they out there working membership for you?

Let’s go out as a family and sign up the grandparents, mothers, wives, daughters and granddaughters of our Legislogues. When a new Legislogue is signed up, have whoever is signing them up ask if they have family that would like to join the Auxiliary or the Sons.

Membership is a program that all members need to get involved in. It’s not just a job for your membership chairman to do. It’s everybody’s job. How about Christmas gifts? Pay for an existing member or sign up a new member for Christmas. Try to do. Then you’re shopping is done early.

Fall Conference is now in the past. Had a wonderful time and I hope everyone did too.

Attended our first American Legion Family Hospital Association meeting and am looking forward to being active in the association.

First time for the Riders to participate in the Grand March. I hope they enjoyed the experience – they are a great group and I’m pleased they agreed to participate. Our NoDak’s Division Mahoney is Vice President Virginia Nelson attended the entire conference.

We were all glad to hear from her and enjoyed her being with us.

Remember to always “Thank a Veteran.”

“Whether you go out into the world, it is best to hold hands and stick together.”

Until next month –

The President’s Column

By Carol Kottom

The 84th annual Fall Conference was held in Marshall, Minnesota, with The Ramada Inn being the host hotel, our Auxiliary Conference at Southwest State University and the Joint Session with The American Legion Family being held at the Red Baron Arena. The Conference was sponsored by the Marshall American Legion Family 113. The Auxiliary was blessed this year with a $10,000.00 grant from the Veterans for Veterans Foundation to be used in our annual Gift Shop and also the $5.00 bill shower. A presentation was made to President Carol Kottom by Don Panpake and Marland Running from the V4V Board. We also received a check in the amount of $1000 which will be used for our Veterans from the P heasannt Dinn er. Chuck Stone presented this to President Carol as well. There aren’t enough thank yous to shout out to both of these groups. This will ensure that we have funds to make our Veterans Christmas very bright this year.

Donna Reep and a crew had a very successful Silent Auction with benefits the American Legion Auxiliary Emergency Fund which is Auxiliary members helping their own. The Auxiliary was to the point in 2017 but it will be around the $4,500.00 mark. Again – thanks to all who donated items and especially to those who upped those bids. This is another area where it makes one proud to be a member, seeing all of The American Legion Family supporting this cause.

HAPPY 97TH BIRTHDAY

Does your Unit know November is “birthday month” for the American Legion Auxiliary? Will your Unit be celebrating? It was November 10, 1919, when the American Legion Auxiliary was established by a resolution adopted at the first National Convention of the American Legion here in Minneapolis. Since then the Auxiliary has grown to around 9000 Units and over 600,000 members. This was blessed the American Legion Auxiliary’s 97th birthday. We hope you are planning a celebration in your Unit. Do something fun and memorable as a Unit.

2017 POPPY ORDERS

Orders for our 2017 Poppies are being accepted. Prices for small poppies are remaining the same as last year. An order form was included in the first unit mailing. Poppy prices: Small Poppies - $180.00 a thousand ($18.00 a hundred) for orders of 500 or less; large Poppies - $18.00 a dozen and the Poppy Window Display cards are $5.50 each while supplies last. Remember that the Department Office no longer has any of the Display cards. You must either order what Emblem Sales offers or come up with your own creative way to make the displays. The 2017 Poppy orders will be shipped on the dates requested on the orders. When you receive your Poppies, please store them in a safe place so they aren’t inadvertently thrown away or wrapped up as a holiday gift. Please check your order upon receipt and report any discrepancies to the Department office.

The Department Office wants to assure you that the Poppies this year are very well made. Our Veterans at the Hastings Veterans Home has been working very hard, along with a few individual Veterans here in Minnesota. As of right now, 93 Units have already placed their Poppy order. We would love to have a 100% participation rate.

PEARL HARBOR RALLY

The Pearl Harbor Auxiliary Membership Rally will be held at the White Park American Legion Post 428 on Saturday, December 3rd. Turn in 3-4:30 p.m., with dinner at 5 and program to follow. Your 2016-17 President and Membership Chairman asks every Unit to have membership ready to be picked up when they or a Legion representative comes to your area. Check with your Post Commander for your pick-up day and time.

Please do not hold membership in your Unit. Mail your transmittals on a regular basis. Just be prepared to those last minute memberships to the representative who comes to pick them up for you.

Let’s make this our Special Holiday Season for our Department President Sandy and Membership Chairman Zandy as we continue to improve our membership counts. We had a great turn in at Fall Conference and need to keep up with all of the Department goals that have been set. Your support, your assistance and your membership and meeting goals. If you need any assistance, please do not hesitate to contact Chairman Zandy Kessler or the Department Office.

CHRISTMAS GIFT SHOP

The Department Office and the Hospital and Home Representatives want to give a big thank you to the Units and Posts that have contributed funds to our Gift Shop program. Again this year, the veterans at the four VA Medical Centers and the five Minnesota Veterans Homes will be selecting gifts for their loved ones through our Gift Shop program. About 2,000 veterans participate in this program. A huge change this year for the Gift Shop is the amount that was approved by the Department Executive Committee to spend on Veterans at the Gift Shop.

The Gift Shop committee has been busy shopping for the gifts and would appreciate your Unit’s financial support of this Program. When our annual Fall Conference saw the nice quality and selection of items the veterans may choose from. Please include a generous cash donation in your Unit’s annual budget and send it to the department office earmarked Gift Shop. Let’s support our own Auxiliary programs first.

Donations to the Gift Shop are accepted all year. You may use Poppy funds and Gambling funds for this program. The Goal this year is to have a very successful December by purchasing gifts at some of the auxiliary’s facilities at the time of the Gift Shop including regular day care patients. The Gift Shop is chaired by Raleen Tolzmann and home garment is Vida Bacon. They are both giving much of their time to make this a very successful event.

What is the Gift Shop? It is where volunteers of the American Legion Auxiliary work together, with the assistance of the Hospital and Home Representatives, to find out what types of gifts are appreciated and needed. Those items are purchased and delivered to the facilities.

Does it Happen? The Gift Shops are set up in the Veterans Homes and Medical Centers all over the State of Minnesota. There are 9 facilities and with the assistance of the Hospital and Home Representatives there will be 9 different Gift Shops (see dates below).

Who does this help? This helps the Veterans and their families. It gives the Veterans a chance to see that gift that they don’t expect and it gives them the ability to give their family members a gift as well.

Who can help? Any Auxiliary member, Auxiliary Junior member, Sons of the American Legion or Legionnaire themselves can volunteer. There are jobs for all ages during the Gift Shops. Please get in touch with your local representative and find out what you can do to help.

GIFT SHOP DATES

Our representatives have announced the date(s) of their Gift Shop at their respective facility.

Tang VAMC December 5

Minneapolis VAMC December 6 & 7

Sioux Falls VAMC December 15

St. Cloud VAMC December 19

Fergus Falls VA Home December 8

Longview VA Home December 8

Leverne VA Home December 8

Minneapolis VA Home December 7 & 8

Silver Bay VA Home December 8

MEMBERSHIP SUPPLIES

If your Unit is in need of additional membership supplies, please contact the Membership Chairman for order cards, application forms for membership, gift shop cards, etc., please send your order to the department office. All supplies are sent from the office upon request.

SEWING INCLUDED

Included in the November/December Unit mailing were the sewing patterns of items needed at the various hospitals/homes. Home Service Chairman please ask your Unit
Auxiliary Bulletin
Continued from Preceding Page

President for these items.
Remember: Times are changing; needs are changing. Please make only those items that are requested by our Representatives to meet the needs of our veterans. Send all completed items to the facility that has requested them in care of our Representative there. Make sure and contact the Representative before bringing items to the facility to make sure they are in need of the items at that time. They don’t have a lot of space for storage so it is very important to contact them.
If your Unit has an active sewing group, may we suggest you contact your local nursing home, shut-ins, etc. within your own community and “sow for them”. Many of these local facilities and their needs are overlooked by our Units and could certainly use your sewing talents.

SECRETARY SANDIE’S NOTES

By the time you are reading this we will have another Fall Conference under our belts. I hope many of you attended. It was a very memorable conference. What a warm feeling it leaves seeing our entire American Legion Family working together and enjoying each other’s compa- ny. The Silent Auction was awesome and as usual there are (3) huge baskets sitting on my kitchen floor wondering, “What am I doing here?” My husband has the same senti- ments. I just get all caught up in the bidding process and somehow hate to lose. I always tell myself it is for a won- derful cause; Auxiliary members helping other members in need.
We have been busy here in the Department Office as membership has finally started to come in. Very sincerely I would like to thank all of you who work so hard to recruit, renew and rejoin but I would also ask that everyone work just a little bit harder so we could make our goals set by National. National has listened to our members and dropped the 1,000,000 member march setting realistic goals this year. We already have some Units at 100%. If you get a chance, visit one of the Gift Shops this year and offer to help. The Hospital/ Home Reps can always use volunteer help. For me, helping at Hastings the past 3 years has been the most rewarding parts of being in this organiza- tion. This year I promised Mary Ann Davis I would be at the Minneapolis VAMCE to help her out. I can’t wait. On the personal side of things, thanks to all Districts but espe- cially my very own 3rd District for allowing me to partake in the cider taste testing contest at Fall Conference. Wann’t that a treat? It was right to bed for me after that.

Shorty and I did it again. We went shopping and got our retirement home on wheels. We decided that’s the way we want to go when and if we are ever able to retire. We both wish all of you a very Happy Thanksgiving and to my fam- ily, Merry Christmas as well. We get to celebrate over Thanksgiving – it will be great having all our kids and grandkids together again.

My shout out this month is to the V4V Board, especially Don Pankake and Marland Ronning and also Chuck Stone with the Pheasant Dinner group for the generous donations. It is a pleasure to work with these gentlemen, especially Don, I always get a few wisecracks out of him.

It is a pleasure to work with these gentlemen, especially my very own 3rd District for allowing me to partake in the cider taste testing contest at Fall Conference. Wann’t that a treat? It was right to bed for me after that.

Thanksgiving – it will be great having all our kids and grandkids together again. Thanksgiving – it will be great having all our kids and grandkids together again.

BRUNO NEW UNIT -- Above, charter members of the Bruno Unit 563, pose with their new charter. Below, President Carol Kottom, Bruno President Sandy Holland and Past 10th District President Dawne Juhl show off the new charter.

Oct. 28, 2016, Auxiliary Membership

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<th>District</th>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Membership to Date</th>
<th>Percent of Goal</th>
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<td>56.07%</td>
<td>27,834</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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November is Past Presidents Parlay Month

November is Past Presidents Parlay month. I hope that every Unit has a Past President’s Parlay. Wouldn’t it be great if Minnesota would have a 100% participation? Many Units have Past Presidents of the District and Department and some even a Past National President. The Past Presidents of all levels are here to assist and mentor mem- bers, you never know. Your Unit might help someone come along to be one of the future Auxiliary leaders. Along with Unit members the Past Presidents Parlay emphasis on women veterans, as our mil- itary has changed and we sometimes seem to overlook what their needs are.

Remember, the deadline for the Past President Parlay Health Care Scholarship is earlier than the Annual Reports. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me for more information. The Unit Guide is also a great tool for information. The November Unit mailing and Trophies and Awards also contain detailed infor- mation on the American Legion Auxiliary Past Presidents Parlay.

Remember to nominate a Unit Member of the year. If chosen, she will be honored at the 2017 National Convention in Reno. Please follow the guidelines listed in the Trophies and Awards document when making your selection.

Past Presidents are ambassadors for the members of the American Legion Auxiliary and are here to share information to make this organization strong and maintain its growth.

NATIONAL WINNER — Brennan Rasmussen was the winner of the annual Department of Minnesota Poppy Poster Contest. His poster then went on to National where it was judged one of the top 7 posters in the nation.

CHRIS RONNING

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- 8 nights accommodations
- Deluxe motor coach transportation
- 20 meals: 9 breakfasts, 4 lunches, 7 dinners
- Deluxe motor coach transportation
- Market Square (San Antonio)
- Riverwalk District
- San Fernando Cathedral
- San Antonio history tour
- Dallas food and history walking tour

Monuments of Washington D.C.
March 31-April 4, 2017
Tour Includes:
- A Season’s Tour Director, Sue Barber
- Roundtrip Delta Airlines flights Minneapolis to Washington D.C.
- 9 nights accommodations in the Washington D.C. area
- Two full-day guided tours of Washington D.C.
- Monument to George Washington’s Mount Vernon Estate and Gardens
- US War Memorial, Capital Hill, Embassy Row, the Korean War Memorial, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the Smithsonian, Marine Luther King, Jr. National Memorial, the Lincoln Memorial, and much more.

Panama Canal Cruise
March 14-30, 2017
Tour Includes:
- A Season’s Tour Manager, Larry Alvay
- Roundtrip Delta Air Lines Flights Minneapolis to San Francisco and return Ft. Lauderdale to Minneapolis
- 1 pre-cruise hotel night at the Holiday Inn Express Fisherman’s Cove
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