Planning for 2018 Centennial ramping up

Minneapolis will host 100th annual convention

Still a year and a half away, momentum is gathering for the 2018 national American Legion Convention to be held in Minneapolis Aug. 24-30, 2018.

It will be the 100th national convention, and a return to the city where the Legion held its first convention. “Our first goal is for those attending to have a great experience in this beautiful city,” Jeff Olson, chairman of the convention planning committee said.

Past National Commander Dan Ludwig agreed. “First and foremost I want to put on a convention that will make the entire Legion Family proud,” Olson said.

While the convention itself is planned and run by the national organization, Minnesota has been discussing ways to make it a memorable event. For instance:

— Each delegate may receive an authentic metal badge, similar to the badges that were worn historically at conventions.

— World War I Doughboy re-enactors will greet delegates at the Minneapolis convention center.

Funraising will help convention and programs

If you’re going to throw a party, you have to pay for it. The Minnesota American Legion along with Mark Davy and Associates are beginning a major fundraising drive beginning with the new year. It will continue up until the time of the 100th annual convention in Minneapolis in August 2018.

The fundraising, however, will not just benefit the convention and its related Minnesota expenses, but donors will also have the option to give money to the various programs of the Minnesota American Legion.

“Over the next few months, corporations, posts and individuals will be contacted and will have an opportunity to contribute to either or both entities,” said Jeff Olson, chairman of the National Convention Corporation of Minnesota.

Olson said the Davy firm was selected to raise funds because of their reputation for quality service for over 30 years. “They have raised millions for various groups over the years.”

The goal of the fundraising will be $1 million.

“Mark Davy & Associates recognizes the special privilege inherent in our relationship with The American Legion,” Michael Davy said. “We believe that Legionsnaires, posts and businesses throughout Minnesota will support this historic event through sponsorships, advertising and personal gifts.”

Giving information is now available on the Department’s website: mnlegion.org. Click on 100th National Convention Information. Brochures are available for corporate giving and for post donations.

Donors can check off either a gift to the convention, for use in making northern swing.

Legion Day at Wolves Feb. 12

The Legion Family Day at the Timberwolves this year is Feb. 12 in a game against the Chicago Bulls at Target Center at 2:30 p.m.

The Department Color Guard from Waite Park Post 428 will present the colors during the National Anthem.

Schmidt Tour to make northern swing

National Commander Charles Schmidt of Oregon will do a sweep of northern Minnesota posts in early February, ending up in the Twin Cities.

Schmidt will begin the National Commander’s Tour on Monday, Feb. 6, with breakfast at East Grand Forks Post 157. Lunch will be at Thief River Falls Post 117 and dinner will be at Bagley Post 16, the home of state Commander Denise Milton.

On Tuesday, Feb. 7, the tour will have breakfast at Bena Post 2001, lunch at Hibbing Post 222, and dinner at West Duluth Post 71.

On Wednesday, Feb. 8, the tour will head south with breakfast at McGregor Post 23, lunch at Pine City Post 51, and dinner at Elk River Post 112.

The final day, Thursday, Feb. 9, will feature breakfast at Buffalo Post 270, the home unit of Department President Carol Kottom, lunch at Richfield Post 435, and dinner at Mound Post 398.

Schmidt was elected National Commander this past August at the National Convention in Cincinnati. He is an Air Force veteran who served 28 years. He started out as an administrative clerk and completed his career as a commissioned officer. His duty stations included the United States, England, Germany, Philippines and Vietnam.

He retired as a major.

He joined a post in Missouri in 1984 and then switched to Burns Post 63 in Oregon. He was executive vice president of the Oregon Federal Credit Union.

He served as Department of Oregon commander from 2004-05 and was Oregon’s National Executive Committeeman for 11 years.

Civil War paintings to remain in place at the state Capitol

History won out at the Minnesota Historical Society.

The MHS’ executive council voted unanimously in December to keep six large Civil War paintings in the Governor’s Reception and Anteroom at the newly renovated Minnesota State Capitol.

The renovation over the past two years opened the door for politicians and others to question the continued display of the historical art. The paintings had been commissioned and hung by Cass Gilbert, the capitol’s famed architect.

Leading the charge to get rid of the paintings was Gov. Mark Dayton, whose office at the Capitol is just inside the Reception Room.

Dayton said he wanted art in the room that “more completely depicts our great state’s varied history.”

The governor was so upset at a prior meeting with the Capitol Preservation Commission, when it appeared that Republican leaders favored keeping the art, that he stomped out of the meeting just as it began.

After the MHS decision, he issued a one-sentence statement, “It’s their decision to make and I accept their decision.”

The six paintings were created by...
Capitol paintings

Continued from Page 1 artists who were nationally recognized at the turn of the 20th Century when the Capitol was built. One painting, in particular, Howard Pyle’s “Battle of Nashville” is considered a masterpiece of Civil War art.

The paintings, which were removed for cleaning and restoration, will be reinstalled at the Capitol in the next few days.

Staffers at the MHS told those at the meeting that preservation was the major determinant in the process of deciding what to do with the paintings.

The Minnesota Capitol was considered at the time of its opening a memorial to the Civil War involvement of Minnesota veterans. There is large statutory honoring Minnesota Civil War generals in the Rotunda, and Civil War regimental flags were on display at the base of the rotunda.

The placement of the Civil War paintings in what Rep. Dean Urdahl, R-Grove City, called the “most important room in the most important building in the state” was very deliberate by architect Gilbert.

The Minnesota American Legion took a strong stance that the paintings should remain, honoring Minnesota’s pioneer veterans for their role in the Civil War.

Randy Tesdahl, Department adjutant, thanked the council for its unanimous vote to restore the paintings to their place of honor.

Two other paintings in the rooms will be moved elsewhere. One painting showed Father Louis Hennepin, a French missionary and explorer, raising his cross, apparently naming St. Anthony Falls in what later became Minneapolis.

Hennepin is surrounded by another explorer and a group of Dakota people, including one bare-breasted woman toting a large pack. In actual fact, Hennepin had been captured by a Dakota war party and was brought to Minnesota by them.

The other painting showed the siege of New Ulm during the Dakota Uprising during the Civil War in Minnesota. Both paintings have been judged to be offensive to the Dakota people. They will be shown elsewhere, perhaps at the Capitol, with what MHS Director Steve Elliott called “more robust interpretation.”

The disappearance of the two paintings will leave two empty frames in the governor’s offices. Rep. Alice Hausman, DFL-St. Paul, pointed out at the Capitol Preservation Commission meeting that no money has been approved to commission new paintings for those spots.

The Capitol will re-open purchased by at least one day prior to the game.

They also may be purchased by calling Uleva Revenaugh at 612-673-8448 or by emailing Revenaugh at elite.revenaugh@timberwolves.com.

The Wolves feature three players 21 years old who are averaging 20 points a game, Andrew Wiggins, Karl-Anthony Towns and Zach LaVine.

Schmidt Tour does north swing

Continued from Page 1

Schmidt and his wife, Linda, live in Hines, Oregon, and have two daughters and six grandchildren.

Those who will be attending the events at the posts should make reservations with the post prior to the event. The complete list of contact people and phone numbers is on this page.

Any post that is at goal or all-time high at the time of the national commander’s visit can have their photo taken with him and receive a special certificate. The photos will appear in the March issue of the Legionnaire.

Posts are encouraged to contact their local media about the visit and invite them to the tour stop. The national commander will do press interviews during the stops.

Two posts have announced information about the upcoming visit.

2017 National Commander’s Tour

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Post</th>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Contact</th>
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<tr>
<td>E. Gr. Forks</td>
<td>Feb 6</td>
<td>701-213-1006, Terry</td>
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<tr>
<td>Th. Ry. Falls</td>
<td>Feb 6</td>
<td>218-689-2707, Arlo</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bagley</td>
<td>Feb 6</td>
<td>218-209-8676, Dennis</td>
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<td>Bena*</td>
<td>Feb 7</td>
<td>218-760-0920, Patrick</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hibbing#</td>
<td>Feb 7</td>
<td>218-263-5754, Bill</td>
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<tr>
<td>West Duluth</td>
<td>Feb 7</td>
<td>218-393-0079, Carl</td>
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<td>McGregor</td>
<td>Feb 8</td>
<td>218-426-4298, Andy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pine City</td>
<td>Feb 8</td>
<td>320-629-2021, Jack</td>
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<tr>
<td>Elk River</td>
<td>Feb 8</td>
<td>763-441-3150, or 763-234-8400, Tom</td>
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<tr>
<td>Buffalo</td>
<td>Feb 9</td>
<td>763-682-4796, Marilyn</td>
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<tr>
<td>Richfield</td>
<td>Feb 9</td>
<td>612-915-0435, Post</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mound</td>
<td>Feb 9</td>
<td>952-472-9582, Kathy</td>
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*The Bena breakfast will be at the Northern Lights Casino.

The Hibbing meeting will be in the Memorial Building.

Copayments for VA outpatients change

The federal VA is amending its formula for veterans outpatient medications for non-service connected conditions.

At the present time, the VA charges $8 or $9 each for 30-day supply of most drugs.

The new formula, which will go into effect on Feb. 27, would eliminate that $9 charge and create a new three-tier payment chart.

Tier I drugs, called preferred generics would be $5 co-pay for a 30 day amount.

Tier II, non-preferred generics, would have an $8 co-pay.

Tier III, or brand name drugs, would have an $11 co-pay.

Co-payments would still end when a $700 cap is reached each calendar year.

The change will mean a savings for veterans who are using preferred generics.

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Medical pot OKed for PTSD

The Minnesota Department of Health has approved the use of medical marijuana for those suffering from PTSD.

The change will take place in August of 2017. Patients will need advanced certification from a Minnesota health care provider.

Minnesota has one of the strictest medical pot laws.
Endorsements

Klinkner endorsed for Dept. VC

Madelia Post 19 has endorsed Steven Klinkner for Department Vice Commander for the 2nd and 7th Districts. Klinkner has served in the National Guard from 1969-1974. He is a PULF Legion member with 40 years of service.

Klinker has served at his post as 1st & 2nd Vice Commander, Post Commander, and Post Adjutant for membership chairman for 30 years, Honor Guard for 40 years, and is a member of the post finance committee.

He is presently the Second District Judge Advocate, past District Commander 2010-2011 and past Department Chairman 2014-2015.

Klinkner is a life-long member of Madelia Saint Mary’s Church and served on St. Mary’s elementary school board. He also served on the Watonwan County Fair Board of 59 and as a board of director on the Madelia Chamber of Commerce Board for 3 years.

Klinker and his wife, Donna (auxiliary member), have been married 44 years and have two children and eight grandchildren.

Jim Peck named to ABCA council

Jim Peck, director of the junior program for Minnesota American Legion Baseball, has been named to the executive committee of the American Baseball Coaches Association. Peck is the first youth coach ever to be asked to serve on this committee.

He is a life member of the ABCA which has about 8,800 members. He is the only youth coach in their Hall of Fame (1998), and he serves also on their hall of fame committee.

One of my goals is to have all youth baseball coaches have some sort of baseball and coaching courses from which they can become accredited.

The big question is how do we get more kids to play baseball? The main issue here is travel ball and academy baseball. The poor family’s kid is now left out and plays another sport at eight years old,” Peck said.

Shop, Ship and Share program gets national Legion spotlight

By Jeff Stoffer

Minnesota Army National Guard Sgt. 1st Class Dan Bronk remembers what it was like to be at a forward operating base during Christmas. When the Chinook helicopters appeared on Dec. 24, 2011, he hoped that something good from home was onboard, something he could use, enjoy or bring a little color to an otherwise drab, dirty and dangerous place.

“It’s not like you could just drive down the road to the store,” said Bronk, who served today as 1st Vice Commander of American Legion Post 39 in St. Paul. “We were at a remote FOB on the top of a mountain.”

He is a life member of the Minnesota American Legion, and he got more than hand wipes. Bronk and his fellow Minnesota troops received unexpected U.S. Postal Service boxes stuffed with gifts—from toiletries to socks to treats and games they could enjoy during the holidays and share with others.

The boxes came from their Minnesota American Legion Family and the U.S. Postal Service, which have joined forces in a project called Shop, Ship and Share for the last nine years.

At the Maplewood Mall near St. Paul to U.S. duty stations all over the world. Dozens of volunteers helped with the record-breaking 2016 effort Dec. 2-3, including American Legion Family members from across the region, National Guardsmen, students from nearly 40 schools, Boy Scout units, Junior ROTC cadets, an American Heritage Girls troop, and many others.

Volunteers at the packing tables ranged from 14-year-old Minnesota American Legion Auxiliary member Kiana Coleman-Woods of Lino Lakes Unit 566 to 94-year-old Virginia Whaley, president of Auxiliary Unit 451 in St. Paul, and World War II B-24 tail gunner Bob Holstrom, a member of American Legion Post 39 in St. Paul. Like many of the participants, Holstrom volunteered for Shop, Ship and Share this year at the mall, Holstrom—who helped fly supplies to American soldiers fighting in the Battle of the Bulge in World War II— recalled that “at Christmas 1944—remembers what it was like to be a young soldier far from home during the holidays.

“Been there and done that,” he said.

“Been there, done that, too — Desert Storm,” added volunteer Bob Leslie, American Legion Riders Chapter President for Arcade-Phalen Post 577. “When they open that box, it’s a piece of home. Hopefully, they will get the message that we have not forgotten about them.”

The idea sprang from a U.S. Postal Service initiative to open a retail outlet in the Maplewood Mall to ease shipping for holiday shoppers. Sunderland said her co-worker, Steve Cunningham, a 2008 graduate at the time and a member of American Legion Post 599 in St. Paul, suggested adding a troop-support element to the satellite post office in the mall.

But the U.S. Postal Service has restrictions about collecting donated items or raising funds. Campos suggested The American Legion’s 4th District of Minnesota step in to assist. Sunderland was born Shop, Ship and Share as a joint effort between The American Legion and the U.S. Postal Service.

With 45 days to go before the first event in 2008, Teresa Ash, 4th District commander at the time, went to American Legion members with a challenge she knew she could be met. “I said I’d like to raise $5,000 for this,” said Ash, the Legion’s Shop, Ship and Share committee chairperson.

Today, “Not only did that happen—they doubled it. They couldn’t have done this without the American Legion Auxiliary.”

This is what The American Legion is all about. People want to be a part of this.

“The Minnesota Legion’s ‘Fighting 5th District’ later locked arms in the effort, and donations from throughout the state began to pour in, as well as the names of deployed personnel and packages overseas.

“We pull in the whole department,” said Robin Picary, 4th District finance officer. “Those of us who have been in the service know what it’s like to be away from home during the holidays. “Their hearts are all in it—to do anything they can for those who are deployed.”

Sunderland said of the Legion volunteers. “It’s outstanding how much this has grown.

One volunteer, Mickey Ostrum of Post 39 in St. Paul, said he thinks Shop, Shop and Share can grow beyond Minnesota’s borders. “Hopefully, it will spread to other areas around the country. If we can do it, there’s reason other departments in The American Legion can’t do it.

There are plenty of troops overseas.

Lisa Ghylin of Post 599 in St. Paul spent two Christmas holidays deployed in Afghanistan. After discharge, she learned about Shop, Shop and Share through her student veterans association at Metropolitan State University, whose members volunteered to help with the effort one year. “I’ve been interested in (Shop, Ship and Share) since before I became a Legion member,” said Ghylin, an Army veteran who promoted the event in her Legion cap Dec. 2 in a live in-studio Twin Cities morning TV news program. “It did spur my membership in The American Legion.”

As adults filled out packing slips and boxed items for distribution, children wrote notes, drew and colored Christmas greetings for the deployed personnel. “We came here so we could help veterans,” said 15-year-old Emily Ash, whose American Heritage Girls troop is sponsored by Maple Grove American Legion Post 172. “We’re glad these pictures are going to the men and women who are serving in Iraq and Afghanistan.”

“They fought for our freedom, so I want to give back,” said Kiana Coleman-Woods, 14, the department’s American Legion Auxiliary honorary junior president. “I want them to know that somebody is looking out for them.”

Ghylin said she’s glad the Shop, Shop and Share because the men and women deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan are always on her mind. “I think about them every day, knowing what I want to do. It sucks to be away so long and so far away from the comforts of home at the holidays.”

Ash, whose son was deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan and received boxes from the American Legion-USPS effort, said the best part of Shop, Ship and Share is feedback from the front. “We get pictures, and to see their faces, it’s just awesome,” she said. “I can’t tell you how rewarding it is. And every single person here (among the volunteers) plays an equally important role. This event brings people together.”

Special guest volunteers and visitors at the mall Dec. 2-3 included two Minnesota Vikings cheerleaders, “GoGo” the Gopher (the University of Minnesota mascot) and the T.C. Bear (the Minnesota Twins mascot).

Minnesota American Legion Department Commander Denise Milton, who spent 30 years in the U.S. Army, including overseas assignments as a nurse, knows what it means to get a something special during the holidays when you’re stationed far away. “I can’t say how important it is to get mail or a package,” she told the crowd. “Often, that’s the only life line you have from home.”

U.S. Army National Guard Col. (ret.) Eric Ahlness was the featured speaker at a program near the end of this year’s event. He was at the same FOB on the mountain top as Sgt. 1st Class Bronk in 2011. “Having care packages from home meant the world to me,” he told a crowd that included the local mayor, a county commissioner, the city police command- er and several American Legion and U.S. Postal Service officials. “That made our day… gave us a little brightness that we wouldn’t otherwise have. It brings brightness. It brings cheer.”

Editor’s note: This story is used by permission from the National American Legion’s website. It was written by the editor of the American Legion Magazine.

Facts about the Shop, Ship and Share program

• The program began in 2008 as a partnership between the U.S. Postal Service and the Fourth District.

• It was held this year at the Maplewood Mall.

• Volunteers from across the state gather to pack boxes to send to troops overseas.

• This year set several records for the two-day program:

  Most volunteers: 150 plus.
  Most boxes sent to troops: nearly 1,200
  Most fundraising: Over $60,000.
Happy New Year Fellow Legionnaires.

I hope that you all had a blessed Christmas. My daughter and I stopped at the computer store to pick up many for the holidays, but due to time and travel constraints they each visited their respective families. I love them both dearly for sacrificing their Christmas for me. I will get a review of each program and it is your opportunity to ask that “one” question you have been waiting to ask. Many of the programs you may have missed out on in the past one to two months and of course are subject to deadlines. As for the consolidated post report (CPR), let’s make an effort to complete it and make that 100% target by July 2017. I promised National Commander Jim Edlund that we definitely would be walking across the stage to accept the certificate at the National Convention. I’m proud of Minnesota and our Legion Family – Let’s do it!

We have so many programs here in the Department of Minnesota that no other department has like Legisville (School Safety Patrol Camp), American Legion Family Hospital Association (a portion of your dues goes to this in addition to many donations from throughout the state.) I am so proud of this program as every Legion Family member is eligible for monetary assistance to be used for paying medical bills. Let’s not forget the Outstanding Enlisted and Reserve Member Recognition (OWRM). We give out active duty post or bases in our state, however, several Guard and Reserve units that been activated several times during this long war. I recently attended a National Convention Corporation meeting in preparation of our hosting this event in 2018. This will mark the 100th convention of The American Legion. We hosted the 1st convention and the same will be true for the 100th convention. I am asking every post to have a designated post on your Centennial Celebration website: centennial legion.org. We have 52 out of 547 posts registered so far which is not bad. However, I am asking District Commanders to promote the registration at your respective mid-winters. Further updates will be available in the upcoming Minnesota Legionnaire.

I wish you all safe travels in the coming weeks as you attend various Legion activities.

For God and Country.

COMMANDER’S COLUMN

By Denise Milton

Mail Call

Zero Tolerance

To the Editor:

I found a post on Facebook saying that Minnesota American Legion Baseball will have a zero tolerance policy for disrespecting the National Anthem. I hope that this is true. We need to take the good heat for five-year Strategic Plan into your wishes for a better Legion. It all begins at the grassroots level – your post.

I know of two districts that have scheduled revitalizations for this month and a handful of posts that are doing their own; thejango can be very successful if well prepared for. If you are hesitant in having a revitalization due to lack of knowledge, do not worry because we have a well-trained membership team here in Minnesota. The national headquarters will send you lists and will also do advance public notification which includes personal notifications in the form of post cards and PSAs in your community and surrounding area. Pick a date (1-3 days) at least a month in advance. It can be done and the success that we have experienced over the last five years has been fantastic.

Membership Director Mark Dvorak and I would like to see more “Open House” style revitalizations at the post level. Invite your veterans and their families to your local post and home show them what we are, what we do and what they are missing out on. Make it an American Legion post home and show them what we are, what we do and what we are missing out on. Make it an American Legion Family affair. In other words, include the Auxiliary, SAL, Riders and Juniors. What better way to let your community know what we are all about.

District Mid-Winter revitalizations have all been prepared and scheduled for the next two months. Take time to attend as they are almost all one-day events. This is the time that you can obtain information and updates on all the programs of The American Legion. I am asking that at least one member from each post attend the conference in their respective district. It is the most excellent way to get a review of each program and it is your opportunity to ask that “one” question you have been waiting to ask. Many of the programs you may have missed out on in the past one to two months and of course are subject to deadlines. As for the consolidated post report (CPR), let’s make an effort to complete it and make that 100% target by July 2017. I promised National Commander Jim Edlund that we definitely would be walking across the stage to accept the certificate at the National Convention. I’m proud of Minnesota and our Legion Family – Let’s do it!

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Honor Guard stipend

To the Editor:

I finally received correspondence as to why we weren’t receiving stipend performing at military. I have sent in form #1164 for the past 2 years and was sent memos asking why we weren’t receiving stipend. Apparently we aren’t professional enough to perform this family request. We were asked to apply for the stipend. I did so. We receive stipend for three years and then it stopped with no explanation. The thing the Military doesn’t understand is we are normally provided this service for comrades and family members of people we know personally. The instructions say that they provide not just the $50.00, but also transportation, meals and what ever else is necessary to do our duty to fulfill this need. Our Honor Guard members console family members and spend time with all family members and friends. I have yet to see the National Guard members make an effort to do what we would do wrapped up in Political Correctness that we forgot creating a warm atmosphere at a critical time such as this.

Harold Jackson, Honor Guard Coordinator

Gaylord

Winnie Smith

To the Editor:

Having read a sizable stack of books about the Vietnam war, American Daughter Gone to War by Winnie Smith was the first one relating to what it was like being an Army nurse in-country. I learned much under the caring hands of these angels in white (or camo), it will answer some questions that have gone unanswered for a long time. If you think PTSD is a big subject, you wouldn’t be wrong. Be prepared, as this will bring nightmares back for some. This book fills a pretty big hole in the story of this conflict. I got interested in this book and bought it so that you never will forget. Amazon carries the paperback reprint for under $20. I was fortunate to stumble on a first edition hard copy at a bargain, not knowing that we have just over 400 copies currently on the same site. If you read it, or have it read, please let me know what your thoughts are.

Randi Koivisto

North Branch

Chris Legionnaire17_Layout 1 12/28/2016 12:24 PM Page 4
Ta died Dec. 10, 2016. He was Third District Commander in Fort Snelling Visitor Center, will be held on Thursday, Jan. 5, 2017, at 3 p.m. St. Cloud VA Medical Center, Auditorium, Building 8, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

History Round Tables

This is a dinner meeting. Reservations should be made through Steve Anderson, 715-386-1268. The dinner is $22. There’s a social hour at 5:30, dinner at 6 and program at 7 p.m.

The World War II History Round Table at the Historic Fort Snelling Visitor Center, will be held on Thursday, Jan. 12. The subject will be the “Battle of Koenigsberg” with author Dennis Snowhate. There will be veterans of the Eastern Front present to discuss this often overlooked struggle by the Russians. Admission is $5.

Milton Testimonial
The Testimonial Dinner for Department Commander Dennis Milton will be held at Shooting Star Hotel and Event Center in Mankato on Saturday, May 6. The featured speaker for the event will be John Brieden, Past National Commander from Texas.

The accommodation is a group of rooms blocked out for the event. If you contact the casino, ask for Hotel Group Code 3732.

There will be more information in the February issue of the Legionnaire.

Hastings Family Events
A partnership of veterans and civic groups, including the American Legion Post 47 has announced a slate of family-focused events for the coming year. The events include a free baseball game, a family table talk, health table talk, a heroes skate and Hastings Veterans Home Community Service Support.

For more information, contact Dean Markussen, 651-438-2208 or email deanrnvet@aol.com.

Fishing Derby
The annual First and Third District’s Fishing Derby will be held on Saturday, Jan. 21. Contestants will meet at the Waseca Post 306, 900 State Street South, Waseca, 56093 and leave at 10 a.m. for the lake. The derby usually lasts for about two hours. There will be awards, food and refreshments after the derby back at the post.

AmazonSmile
People can make donations to The American Legion now while shopping on Amazon. American Legion Charities is now one of the charities available to donate through AmazonSmile. (smile.amazon.com)

When a person shops on AmazonSmile, you’ll find the same prices, a huge selection and the same shopping experience as Amazon.com, but you can also donate a portion of the purchase price to a charity, such as American Legion Charities.

Amazon will donate 5 percent of the purchase price to the charity you select.

Family Support Network
The Family Support Network was created in 1990 to aid military families if they were experiencing problems while a loved one was deployed. The request for help would go through a local post, and it might include car repair, snow shoveling, emergency help, or connecting a family with the right government or private agency.

At this time, the program has faded away, but many times the need for help is still there. But often reserve or Guard units don’t even know about it.

Posts are urged to contact their local Guard or reserve unit in person and introduce yourselves. Let them know that the post and its members can be a resource for families with members in the reserves. More information on the Family Support Network can be obtained at www.legion.org/family support.

Informative for Our Readers

The clinics include:

- Eye care
- Hearing aid
- Diabetes
- Blood pressure
- Osteoporosis
- Physical therapy
- Occupational therapy
- Nutrition
- Social work services
- Family counseling
- Counseling and referral
- Mental health
- Substance abuse
- Substance abuse counseling
- Mental health counseling


Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

By Jeremy Wolfsteller

Combat-Injured Veterans

Serving the country in the Armed Forces is one of the most noble things a person can do. It is a choice some one makes that is much greater than oneself. Selflessness, loyalty and duty are just a few characteristics needed to complete the job. The end of the time of war, service members are called to serve in foreign countries to protect the freedoms and liberties we have at home. Like any war, service members return with injuries, both physically and mentally. These injuries can lead to a medical separation through the Department of Defense because they can no longer perform their duties. The process the department of Defense uses for a medical separation is called the Integrated Disability Evaluation System. Both the Veterans Health Administration and Department of Defense evaluate the service member. While DOD focusses only on the unfit for duty conditions, the VA looks at every medical condition caused by the service. The “key percentage” is anything 30% and over for DOD unfit conditions to get a retirement. If their rating for unfit conditions is 20% or less, a service-member receives a “medical separation” and possible severance pay.

There are severances and severance payments. Since January 17, 1991 the Department Finance and Accounting System (DFAS) through DOD has been taxing a death duty or severance payment and many more are related to combat service. Under federal law, veterans who suffer disablement or are who are separated from the military are not supposed to be taxed. These actions were recently identified by National Veterans Legal Service Program. The Working with legislators to support these individuals would repay this handful of veterans who were wrongfully taxed. December 16, 2016 President Obama signed into law The Veterans Tax Fairness Act of 2016. Approximately $78 million dollars were wrongfully withheld from thousands of disabled combat veterans, approx. 13,800.

The Department of Defense is now tasked with identifying certain severance payments to veterans with combat-related injuries. Through the years, January 17, 1991, federal law provided the DOD withheld amounts for tax purposes, and identified the individual’s tax obligations. The Department of Defense is now working on this process to provide each veteran with notice of the amount of improperly withheld severance payments, and instructions for filing amended tax returns to recover such amount.

The period for filing a related claim with the Internal Revenue Service for a credit or refund is extended beyond the three year limitation to the date that is one year after DOD provides the veteran with the information required by the law.

For more information contact jwolfsteller@mnlegion.org.

Legion cited as top resource for jobs

An annual survey of veterans and employers shows The American Legion as one of the top resources for jobs for veterans looking for work or resources in their job search. The annual Veteran Talent Index (VTI) was established in 2011 by Monster and Military.com to help transitioning service members get a better grasp of the employment landscape.

“The VTI was initially created to provide information on why veterans, specifically, post-9/11 veterans, faced a high-thing 30% and over by DOD for unfit conditions to get a retirement. If their rating for unfit conditions is 20% or less, a service-member receives a “medical separation” and possible severance pay.

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Pearl Harbor Rally at Waite Park

The Pearl Harbor Rally held in December at the Waite Park Post 428 featured as the main speaker the Marketing, Media and Communications Director for the national American Legion, Jeff Stoffer.

Stoffer, who is also the editor of The American Legion Magazine, first spoke on the significance of the 75th anniversary of Pearl Harbor, and the beginning of World War II.

“That was a war that shaped everyone of us,” Stoffer told the 200 or so ralliers. “Sixty million lives were lost around the world.”

He noted that the war ended with the use of the atomic bomb. “The A-bomb proved that we have the power at our fingertips to end civilization as we know it. Albert Einstein said, ‘I know not how World War III will be fought, but World War IV will be fought with sticks and stones.”

Stoffer said the GI Bill, which emerged from World War II with Legion sponsorship, sent eight million GIs into higher education and changed the world.

Stoffer then shifted gears and described how he wrote a book and documentary film, *Mother of Normandy, The Story of Simone Renaud.* Renaud was from St. Mere Eglise, a town in Normandy where 15,000 American soldiers were buried following the D-Day invasion in 1944.

She spent 40 years writing letters to the families of soldiers who were buried there.

Stoffer said that the American sacrifice for France is so highly thought of in St. Mere Eglise that on D-Day each year the American Flag is flown above the French flag.

The results of the rally included:

- **District 1** at 74.21 percent was in first place for the Auxiliary following the turn-in at the rally.
- **The Fifth District** with 75.07 percent led the way for the Sons of the American Legion.
- **The Third District** was first in The American Legion standings with 82.93 percent.

“With all of our efforts, we can achieve our goal if everyone is focused and motivated,” Membership Chairman Mark Dvorak said.

The next rally will be the Sweetheart Rally on Feb. 4 in New Prague.

**Membership Chart**

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Waite Park presents colors at Gopher game

Waite Park Post 428, this year’s official Department Color Guard, presented the flag at the University of Minnesota Gopher basketball game just before Christmas. Color bearers who can be seen, from left, are Tom Kurkel, Tom Fernlund, Michael Fernlund and Wes Thompson.
Ray Pittman wanted to be a helicopter pilot, but ended up driving tanks for the 11th Cav in Vietnam. He was on the road, or lack of road, nearly every day until his tank was blown up by a land mine.

Ray Pittman

By Al Zdon

Ray Pittman remembers one nurse saying to another nurse in a U.S. Army hospital in Saigon, “I don’t think he’s going to make it.”

“That scared the shit out of me,” he said.

Pittman survived, but his long trek from having his tank blown up in Vietnam was far from over.

Raymond Joseph Pittman was born in St. Cloud, lived in Hibbing for several years, Cambridge for a while, and then moved to North Branch with his family where he graduated from high school in 1967. At North Branch he was a football player. “I loved football, but then I broke my nose and my mom and dad said I couldn’t play anymore.”

A war was going on in Vietnam in the 1960s. “I had a medical condition in third grade and so they held me back. I was about the same height of my classmates. The draft board was standing outside the door of my high school when I graduated.”

Pittman fooled them, though, by enlisting in the Army for three years instead. “I didn’t want to be a grunt. Everybody I knew that went to war was a grunt, and I didn’t want to.”

His enlistment gave him additional leverage in choosing his Army career, and his first choice was to be a helicopter pilot.

“The trouble was they were pushing so many guys through helicopter school that I would have to wait nine months to get in, and then I would have to re-enlist for an additional year so I could do two tours in Vietnam. I really didn’t want to do that.”

His next choice was tank school at Fort Knox, following in the footsteps of his older brother. “I wanted to be where I’d have a place to sleep every night. I loved tank school. I’d go back and do it again.”

After learning all about tanks, he went on to non-commissioned officer school, also at Ft. Knox, and then it was off to Vietnam.

“I was flown to Oakland and then got on a DC-8 that island-hopped all the way to Vietnam. I landed at Ton Son Nhut Air Base on July 1, 1968.”

“I got off the plane. It’s like when you’re baking cookies in the oven and you open the door and you get that blast of heat. That’s what Vietnam was like. That wall of heat just hit you and all you could say was ‘Whoa.’ It was 110 degrees outside.”

He spent three days getting his jungle gear. “They didn’t have those tropic suits that they did in the states. You couldn’t survive in those. These were like a thin nylon.” He was given an M-16 rifle, and a .45 pistol and flown to the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment in C Troop. The regiment was commanded by George S. Patton IV, son of the legendary World War II general.

The helicopter landed in the middle of a wagon wheel formation. The tanks and tracks (armored personnel carriers) were in a circle with their guns pointing outwards. Also in the circle were two big guns: M-109 155 mm howitzers.

His first assignment was to stand watch that night, which meant sitting in the turret of an M48 Patton tank in charge of a .50 caliber machine gun.

“There I was, green as a cucumber, standing guard duty.” The trouble was they were pushing so many guys through helicopter school that I would have to wait nine months to get in, and then I would have to re-enlist for an additional year so I could do two tours in Vietnam. I really didn’t want to do that.”

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“There I was, green as a cucumber, standing guard duty.”

One of the tactics of the armored unit was to spray the surrounding brush with machine gun bullets every 15 minutes all night long. It was an effort to keep the enemy from sneaking into the American formation.

“That was strange enough, but then during the night one of the 155s fired a shell, right next to me. It was just this incredible boom, and it scared the bejesus out of me. I didn’t know if it was incoming or outgoing or what.”

Pittman survived his first night, and then joined his comrades in a continuous pursuit of the enemy. “The 11th Cav was a search and destroy outfit. We rarely stayed in the same place for more than one day. In the morning we just packed up our stuff and took off.”

“We were trying to pick a fight with the enemy, and we were in fire fights a lot. We were poking around a bee’s nest, trying to make them mad. We even went into Cambodia for a month.”

But it wasn’t quite the wild west. “The rules of engagement were just a joke. We couldn’t fire, even if we were fired upon, from 6-9 every morning because the civilians were going to work. Then from 9-3 we could shoot at anything we wanted, and then from 3-6 it was restricted again as the civilians went home from work.”

The troop was comprised of 11 vehicles including three tanks and eight APCs. Sometimes the going was easy, as when there were roads in the rubber plantations and the tracked vehicles could just rumble along. Other times, it meant slogging through the jungle.

“Especially in Cambodia, the tanks would just go up the vines until the weight of the tank brought them down again, and then it was up the vines and fall down again. That was thick jungle.”

In Cambodia, the tankers communicated with the Montagnards, or mountain people, who were pro U.S. “They’d tell us where the gooks were, and we’d go after them.”

If a situation began to go bad, the armored unit could call in help. “The F-4s would come in and drop napalm, or we might get Cobras (attack helicopters) or even a gunship (attack propeller planes).”

Pittman started out on the lowest rung as a loader in the four-man tank crew. He worked his way up to gunner and then to driver over the next few months. The fourth position was tank commander, usually held by a higher ranking
enlisted man or an officer.

The 11th Cav’s base camp was at Loc Ninh, about 50 miles southeast of Saigon.

In the field, if the supply helicopters could reach them, the soldiers often had hot breakfast and hot dinners every day. “The Chinooks brought in breakfast in the morning, usually scrambled eggs, orange juice, other stuff. We’d also get boxes of cigarettes and candy bars. At night, they’d come back with dinner. Sometimes it was steaks, cheeseburgers, spaghetti. It was whatever they were serving at the base camp they were flying from. Actually, the food wasn’t that bad. But if they didn’t show up, it was C rations.”

The helicopters would never stay long. “They would have the food in these big canisters, and they’d just shove it off the end of the helicopter. I hated it when you’d just be starting to eat, and the Chinook would take off and there was dust and dirt flying everywhere, including in your food. Of course, we ate it anyway.”

Pittman said the group of armored vehicles would almost always settle into a defensive position at night. “The one time we did travel at night was when the officers knew there were gooks nearby. They decided to send us out as bait. We had two APCs in the lead with their lights on, and the rest of us were behind with no lights. When the first two got hit, the idea was that the rest of us would come up to help. Not too many guys liked those bait situations.”

One scary moment came when C Troop and the other two troops in the regiment were settled down for the night on a rubber plantation. One of the other troops didn’t know where C Troop was.

“We were getting ready for supper and the guys were rattling their cups and plates and A Troop heard us and opened up on us. I was sitting on top of a tank and I saw the tracers come through the trees. I just dove down below.”

“We had bamboo poles holding up some ponchos, and the fire was hitting the tops of those poles.”

“I could tell it was American fire because of the color of the tracers. Somebody got on the horn right away and called it off; but it was pretty scary for a while. Nobody got hurt.”

He remembers his CO, Colonel Patton. “He was just as crazy as his old man. He liked to fly over the scene of the battle in an OH-6. They called it a Loach. It was just a small helicopter.

“When we’d get into a firefight, he’d be up there in his Loach leaning out the door, with one foot on the skid, hanging on with one hand and shooting his .45 pistol at the enemy. Then one day he got shot in the foot. He didn’t do that anymore.”

Pittman said maybe his closest call came one day in the midst of a fire fight. “I was firing the machine gun in one direction, when all of a sudden something told me to fire the other way. I swung the machine gun around, and I could hear tink, tink, tink on the armor in front of the machine gun. If I’d been facing the other way, one of those bullets would have hit me. That woke me up.”

He said the tanks and tracks were very reliable. “Although one time in the middle of a pouring rainstorm, I hit a big bump and threw a track.”

Getting the heavy metal track back on the tank was a slow, laborious process that included winching the track back up on the tank wheels, pulling it tight and then putting in a new piece of track to connect it all up.

“One guy could do it. They taught us that in armor school. But it was best to have help.”

The weeks in the jungle became months. Pittman learned that he had earned a two-week rest and recreation leave, and he was trying to decide whether to go to Australia or Thailand. His troop had lost two tanks and three APCs since he had arrived, mostly from rifle powered grenades.

It was almost exactly six months since he had arrived in Vietnam when disaster struck.

“It was a Thursday morning. We had spent the night at a Big Red One (First Division) base camp, and had spent the night in pretty serene surroundings for a change. Our job that day was to haul South Vietnamese troops into the jungle. As many as could hold on would climb on top of the tank and we would drive them a mile or so into the jungle. Then we’d come back for another load.

Pittman was the tank driver, sitting in a hatch just in front of the turret, steering the huge vehicle.

“We were taking turns taking the lead, and on the third trip it was my tank’s turn. We had been going through this hole in the hedgerow all morning, but then, BOOM, we hit a land mine.”

“It lifted the tank straight up on its end. I remember seeing blue and wondering what it was. Later I realized it was the sky. Then the tank fell back down into the crater.”

“The hole in the ground was 10 feet deep and 20 feet wide.”

“People ask me what it felt like when we hit the mine. The only way I can describe it is it’s like if you had a garbage can over your head and all of a sudden a great big flash bulb went off in your face and somebody hit the garbage can with a baseball bat and someone else kicked you in the ass with a size 12 boot, all simultaneously. All I could see was that very bright flash.”

The mine had blown three wheels off each side of the tank and we would drive them a mile or so into the jungle.

In basecamp, it sometimes was time for a shave.

After a major firefight, Pittman rested next to his machine gun. The enemy had been in the near distance.

The armored unit would sometimes provide transit service for South Vietnamese forces who would hop on board for a ride into the jungle. It was on one of these missions that Pittman’s tank was blown up by a land mine.

In basecamp, it sometimes was time for a shave.

An armored personnel carrier, or a “track” would also serve as a place to sleep for the night.

Pittman posed atop an M-48 Patton tank.

M-48 Patton Tank

Number built: 12,000
Weight: 50 tons
Length: 30 feet
Height: 10 feet
Width: 12 feet
Crew: 4
Main armament: 90 mm T54 gun
Secondary armament: 30 cal Browning machine gun
30 cal M73 machine gun
Engine: V-12 gas twin turbo, 650 horsepower
help came, and the first sergeant and a couple of medics helped pull Pittman from the tank. "I looked down, and as my legs came free, my feet swung around and were facing the right direction again.

The medics attached plastic, blow-up casts to his legs and gave him morphine, although Pittman said he really couldn’t feel any pain.

"I remember a Huey (small medevac helicopter) landed about 20 feet away and they put me on board. I remember being excited because it was my first helicopter ride. They took me to some MASH (mobile army surgical hospital) in the jungle."

He was there for four days, and then moved to Saigon where he stayed three or four more days. It was at Saigon that he almost died.

"I got pneumonia. My lungs kept filling up with fluid and they had to work on me all night long. It was very tough and go.

There, lying his bed trying to breathe, was where he heard the nurses confide that he probably wasn’t going to make it. But the night passed. "The doctors pulled me through. It wasn’t easy."

Finally he was moved to a major Army hospital in Japan where he stayed for two weeks, then he was flown to the United States to Edwards Air Force Base, and finally to Fitzsimmons Army Medical Center in Denver.

"There was still something wrong with my spine at that point, and one of the doctors told me I would never walk again. I just made up my mind right there that I was going to walk. And I did."

The spinal cord finally began to heal, but the doctors were having great trouble with the broken bones in the legs. "Three times they set the bones, but they would always slide to the side. They did nine surgeries on my legs."

"Finally a doctor came up to me with a piece of paper. He said, ‘He said that they were afraid I was going to get gangrene, and he wanted me to sign a release to remove my legs below the knees. He said if I got gangrene, they probably would have to remove the legs above the knees."

"So I had this piece of paper in front of me. I said, ‘No, I’m not going to sign it.’ He got mad at me and walked out of the room."

Shortly thereafter, a Japanese doctor came into the room. "He said, ‘Well, I’d like to try something different.’ He said if it didn’t work I’d probably end up as an amputee. I told him just to keep trying, but I wasn’t going to sign any papers."

The new technique involved setting the bones and then securing them with pins, like darning needles. The legs would then be secured with a cast.

It worked, and the bones began to heal.

Months later, Pittman was still on crutches, but getting better every day when an orderly came though the Fitzsimmons hospital and threw a large envelope on his bed. He was certain that it would contain his paperwork for a medical discharge from the Army. He still had a year to go on his enlistment.

Instead, the orders in the envelope commanded him to report to Fort Leonard Wood in Texas to resume active duty. "I hobbled down the hallway to the CO’s office, knocked on the door, walked in, didn’t salute and threw my orders on his desk and said, ‘What the hell is this?’"

The commanding officer first chewed him out for being disrespectful, and then answered his question. "You can still lick a stamp, can’t you?" he asked Pittman. "Don’t worry, they’ll give you some crude job to finish out your last year."

His first job at Leonard Wood was driving a truck, but it was too hard on his legs. He was then given a new Jeep and made the company commander’s driver. "I had fun with that Jeep. I put on chrome lug nuts. I put in red leather seat covers. I spiffed it up really nice."

But one day another group commander saw the Jeep and called him in. "I thought I was going to get my ass chewed out, but instead he requested me to be his driver."

He went back to the railroad where he had worked before he joined the service and enjoyed the work very much. He was working his way up to becoming an engineer.

"But my girlfriend’s parents wanted me to go to college before I married their daughter. I didn’t want to do it. I had a great job, tons of money. In the end, he enrolled at the Minneapolis College of Art and Design to learn to be a photographer, an interest he’d always had."

He held many jobs over the years including running a photo studio, owning a novelty business, managing a drug store, and finally working for the state in their travel management department, where he retired in 2007. He never remarried.

He has mixed his love of aviation with his professional training and become one of the top aviation photographers in the state.

As part of a reserve unit in the 70s, he began arranging flyovers at parades and other events in North Branch, Forest Lake and all across the state, a volunteer effort he still does. Several newspaper stories have been written about his ability to arrange flyovers of World War II planes, military helicopters, or other aircraft.

He also has one of the largest die-cast model collections in the United States, filling shelf after shelf of his home in North Branch. He has created his own models of Lake Superior ore boats, using the schematics provided by the mining company.

On the side, he sells those ore boat models, other novelty items, pins, and more. He’s a busy guy.

And, except for the large bulges on his legs, he has fully recovered from that day long ago in Asia when his tank was blown up by a mine.
Legionnaires.

I hope everyone had a safe and Happy Christmas. I want to thank all the Posts that extended an invite to their Veterans Day functions. I was particularly impressed with the Post Everlasting program that the Waseca Post had following their dinner. It was truly an awe-inspiring event. It is a chance for everyone to learn and to have the opportunity to meet many people.

I want to thank Adams Post for hosting our Post Membership Revitalization on January 28, 2017. Call to order will be 1:30 p.m. at Brainerd. We will meet at the Arcade-Phalen Post at noon. Our website is progressing nicely. The public relations board meeting with Shawn Davis to review what has been done so far and make suggestions for enhancements. Our next Hospital Visit will be January 15 when we will meet with the 4th District. We will meet at 1:00 p.m.

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Greetings from the Fighting Fifth. The holiday season is over and we are now into a new year. I hope the new year will be a healthy and prosperous one for all. December was a busy month as it started out with the Shop-Yourself-Silly. Then when the 5th District joined with the 4th District to send care boxes to our Minnesota Veterans deployed overseas. It was a great event and we pledged our support again for next year. I want to thank everyone from our District who attended. Our District fundraiser with the pancake breakfast at Wold-Chamberlain Airport post 99 was a great success and we got a good start toward the money we need for our project for the Veteran’s home. We are planning on doing another breakfast in the near future and a spaghetti dinner in March.

We will be holding a Post Membership Revitalization on January 12, 13 & 14 at the No St Paul Post #39, beginning each day @ 10:00 a.m. We hope to see at least one member from each post there every day. We need help Membership Chair Mickey Ostrum achieve 100% for the third year in a row.

The Shop-Yourself-Silly was held on the Maplewood Mall on December 2nd & 3rd. It was another excellent event with us packing and shipping 102 boxes to our active and veteran service men and women. Thanks to all of the members and the Vice Commanders and our membership director Mike Schaffer who worked very hard to recapitulate the lead and win the Prestige Trophy for the 2016 year.

I am also happy to see that many of you have risen to the challenge of meeting the 95% goal early. Thank you for all of your hard efforts, I know this is not easy especially at this time of the year. Please keep up the great work.

We are having our mid-winter conference in Redwood Falls at the Legion on January 27 & 28 with the Executive Board meeting Friday night and the Conference on Saturday. We are planning on being at 100% with coffee, doughnuts at 7 a.m. Lunch will be served by the Post. I encourage everyone to attend and take part of the conference. It is a chance for everyone to learn and to have the input that matters, YOUR VOICE! Also, bring along any membership teams please do the calling of ones that have not paid their dues yet. Remember most of the members are already collected. Posts should use a per- centage input that matters, YOUR VOICE! Also, bring along any collection materials available and send it back. Just fill it out and don’t discard it. It only takes a few minutes.

We also held our annual Christmas rally in Waubun and had a great event sponsored by the Auxiliary. Everyone had a great time and we even managed to raise close to $300 for the Commander and President’s joint project. This year the Auxiliary President and myself have decided to join forces and raise money for the Woman’s Wating and Lactation Room at the Fargo VA. While many of you reading this already know of the many Veteran’s who have served with you, there is still a misconception that those who need benefits and served with both honor and distinc-
tion. Many female veterans suffer from the same illness, injuries and internal scars that haunt their male counter-
parts. The toughest part of the membership year is fast approaching. The snowmobile rally has been a great success and the memberships are already collected. Posts should use a per-
sonal connection, phone call, letter, email, text, visit, what-
ever it takes to reach those members. If your Post is at 100% of goal, try to find another member. Together we are strong and with a new administration come-
ing in January, we as veterans need to stand strong and remind American that we are and were on the front lines so they could and continue to sleep in peace at night. For God and Country.
BACKUS PARTY -- Alexis Huesmann, four days old, meets Santa at the annual Backus Auxiliary Unit 368 Christmas Party. Over 80 attended.

WOODBURY WALL -- Henry Kolashinski and Tom Grezek and Santa Claus participate in the Woodbury Post 521 Wall of Thanks Fund Drive. Proceeds went to the post, the food shelf, Hastings Veterans Home and the Rest Camp on Big Marine.

LEGION GRADS -- Dan Williams, Fourth District, and Ralph Schneekloth, First District, recently graduated from Legion College held in Indianapolis.

BAYPORT HONOREES -- Bayport Post 491 recently paid tribute to members with 60 years or more service. From left: Les Krondag, Charlie Halberg, Irv Johnson, Eugene Bell, Ron Pevert, Don Thron, Charlie Clesman, Richard Mockler, Gerald Nolde, and George Seigfried.

COAST GUARD TRIP -- Five Coast Guardsmen were on the Twin Cities Honor Flight for Korean War veterans in October. They were greeted on their tour by former Sen. Bob Dole of Kansas. The Minnesota veterans included Chris Kalogerson, Dick Anderson, Bill Anderson, Donn Latourell and Russell Olson.

PAYNESVILLE FLAGS -- The flags at the new Paynesville Post 271 Veterans Memorial flew for the first time on Veterans Day. The memorial began as an Eagle Scout project by Brockten Vavra that was adopted by the post which sold paver blocks to finance it. Pavers are still available. (Paynesville Press photo)

TYLER SINGS OUT -- Members of the Tyler Post 185 sang patriotic songs on Veterans Day at the Tyler Sunrise Nursing Home.

FALLDIN DELIVERS -- Falldin Post 555 delivered school supplies to Valley View Elementary School in Columbia Heights, one of seven schools the post brings supplies to every year. From left: Paul Soderberg, post sergeant-at-arms, Principal Willie Fort, and Adjutant Ray Eiden.

HILLMAN DINNER -- Hillman Post 602 hosted its annual Pheasant Dinner in October for local veterans from area nursing homes. World War II vets were also invited. The post provides the full pheasant dinner with all the trimmings.
Foundation donates to five vets homes

The Minnesota American Legion Foundation gave $25,000 to the Minnesota Veterans Homes. The grants were of $5,000 to each of Minnesota homes in Luverne, Hastings, Minneapolis, Silver Bay and Fergus Falls.

Each home selected the project it would use the money for.

“I want to thank the individuals of the Legion, Auxiliary and SAL along with the posts, units, squadrons and districts who gave to Fund 85, the veteran assistance fund. Without your help, these donations could not have happened,” said Lloyd Ricker, president of the Foundation.

FERGUS FALLS -- Foundation President Lloyd Ricker presented the check to Deanna Mounts, development and volunteer coordinator for the Fergus Falls home. The money will be used for a three-season greenhouse so residents can get the therapeutic value of gardening.

HASTINGS -- Wayne Hammon Jr., secretary of the Foundation, presented a check to Susan Register, volunteer services coordinator and Andrew Burnside, director at Hastings. The home will use the money to help buy a new bus to take veterans to the Minneapolis VA Medical Center.

MINNEAPOLIS -- Foundation Vice President Bruce Kottom presented a check to Sandy Larson, public affairs director, and Cory Glad, director of the Minneapolis home. The project in Minneapolis is a circle of eight flags at the entrance to the home.

SILVER BAY -- Foundation Vice President Bruce Kottom and Department Commander Denise Milton presented a check to Ward Wallin, volunteer program administrator at Silver Bay. The money will be used to help construct a band shell to be used to entertain veterans and for other outside functions.

HONORED GUESTS -- Past Department Commander Dennis Henkemeyer brought his family to dinner at the Waite Park Rally. From left in front are father John Henkemeyer, brother Tom and mother Harriet.

Houston Shooters -- Houston Post 423 shooters set a new NRA national team record this year. The team consisted of Korey Kinstler (assistant coach), Madalyn Schutte, Ethan Kintzler, Haley Alfson, Eli Johnson, Lillian Carlson and Jay Johnson (coach.)

WILLMAR MARINE -- Willmar Post 167 member James G. Johnson ran the Marine Corps Marathon in Arlington, Virginia. His time was 4:35:55.

DENT CEREMONY -- Dent Post 148 conducted a flag retirement ceremony at a local school.

Listening Post

HONORED GUESTS -- Past Department Commander Dennis Henkemeyer brought his family to dinner at the Waite Park Rally. From left in front are father John Henkemeyer, brother Tom and mother Harriet.

WILLMAR MARINE -- Willmar Post 167 member James G. Johnson ran the Marine Corps Marathon in Arlington, Virginia. His time was 4:35:55.

HONORED GUESTS -- Past Department Commander Dennis Henkemeyer brought his family to dinner at the Waite Park Rally. From left in front are father John Henkemeyer, brother Tom and mother Harriet.

Glad to see your doctor to get rid of the root and drive again. What a relief. Still a little bit stiff but getting better each day. This is all for putting up with me and my knee walker for so long, for the “get better” notes and for just being such good friends through the whole ordeal.

It is a learning experience. There are so many good ideas and times throughout the month. Each visit is unique and each scene by the tree. People donate to have names of deceased needs and the homes for their major needs. The homes are nursing homes. They are anything but. Our veterans what a great conversion. And I will never, ever call our VA dinners; St Cloud, Silver Bay, Minneapolis VAHCS, American Legion Representatives at the hospitals and doing all the planning and shopping. Thank you to the gift shop committee, Raleen Tolzman and Vida Bacon for doing all the planning and shopping. Thank you to the American Legion Representatives at the hospitals and homes for putting it all together and making it work. You guys are all fantastic and I can’t thank you enough.

Visited some of the VA hospitals and homes for pheasant dinners; St Cloud, Silver Bay, Minneapolis VAHCS, Minneapolis Home, Fergus Falls, and Fargo. The pheasant dinners were all fabulous but I enjoyed the tours even more. I didn’t realize that Silver Bay had originally been a school.

What a great conversion. And I will never, even call our VA homes nursing homes. They are anything but our veterans are lucky to have places like the hospitals for their everyday needs and the homes for their major needs. The homes are going more and more to single person rooms, some have kitchen facilities for each section and some have pets there. It was wonderful to get the opportunity to see the facilities and visit with the directors and staff. Please stop if you ever have the opportunity as there are a lots of areas you can visit, or make an appointment to take a tour.

Freeborn Unit introduced a new concept to Bruce and me. It is a special Christmas event for them. They planted a tree and have a Set Memories Aglow sign and nativity scene by the tree. People donate to have names of deceased friends and/or family members read. After the reading of the names, the lights on the tree turned on. The proceeds are donated to the Albert Lea Hospice program.

Thanks to all the Units for the invitations and the good times throughout the month. Each visit is unique and each is a learning experience. There are so many good ideas and so many friends presenting them.

Again, please help with membership. We are behind last year and last year was behind the year before and on and on. Thank you for all you have done to help us reach our goals and maintain our members. This is our most important program and hopefully we’ll all keep working on it.

Congratulations Mary Rose Merry Christmas with friends and family and that we are all ready to begin 2017. Resolutions anyone? I don’t make them because I’ve never quite figured out the secret to keeping them.

Remember during this time of the year to keep our veterans. Department Chairmen did what we have the freedoms we so enjoy. A special shout out to our veterans who are not home with their families over the holidays. Know that we are grateful for your service and you are always in our thoughts and prayers. May 2017 bring us all blessings and happiness.
Auxiliary Bulletin

Continued from Previous Page

amount they are giving for scholarships as well this year.

THANK YOU VOLUNTEERS

There is a very special group of people who serve our hospitals and our veterans throughout 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 with the Christmas Gift Shop and $5.00 Bill Shower programs. Our appreciation and many thanks to all our representatives and the volunteers who serve with them.

Naomi Hill, Sioux Falls; Mary Ann Davis, Minneapolis; Jan Benson, St. Cloud, Jeannette Mertens, Luverne, Phyllis Mauler, Silver Bay, Sandra Gibson, Minneapolis, Carolyn Albertson, Fargo, Doris LaFayette, Fergus Falls, Darlene Wonga, Hastings.

Thanks, ladies, for all that you do.

WASHINGTON CONFERENCE

The 2017 Washington Conference will be held in Washington D.C. February 26 – March 1, 2017. If any member is interested in attending, please contact the department office for details or go to the National website, www.alaforveterans.org. I was able to attend last year and I strongly suggest if you have the time, make sure to attend. I learned and saw much of our country’s history in the show. I was there – it was amazing.

SECRETARY LINDSEY’S NOTES

To those of you battling illnesses, or just down and out – I pray for a prosperous new year, keep on supporting our veterans. For President Carol and myself – everybody please have a very happy and prosperous new year for President Carol and get to the top of the nation and meet our goals for this year.

Now for the personal side of things (no pulpit), just fun –– this month’s huge shout out goes to Patsy and Emil, who I seemed to have forgotten in the past. I don’t know what happened after all the times Emil and Shorty have made Patsy and I wonder, what the heck. Oh those Fire Department days. A little bird (short one) told me Cletus, you know who you are, Gregor, that I was responsible for the horrible play of the Vikings last Sunday. I had to nearly mortgage the farm to buy the tickets and I do believe my grandson’s 4th grade team in Texas could have beat them. If I wouldn’t have been so darned high up I would have marched down on the fiddlers, those of those highly paid athletes right where the sun don’t shine. I have been a fan since WW11, yes I am that old (almost), and there have been bad years, but I have never seen a team play so poorly. The stadium is gorgeous, but I don’t know how they will fill it with family at home with visits, cards, and find out what kind of help they can use or need.

The POW/MIA Recognition Day is held the 3rd Friday of every September every year. With the use of DNA and other ways of identification the remains of servicemembers from WWII, Korea and Viet Nam are being recovered, identified and returned to their families for proper burial and closure for the families.

The Armed Forces Services Center is an all free stop for DOD and PHS employees on travel orders, as well as other members of the uniforms services on active duty. They have a place to rest, food to eat, bed to sleep in and televisions and books to help pass time between flights at no cost to them. Thanks to donations from veteran’s organizations, businesses and individuals and volunteers this is a free service to our military who are serving our country.

We keep our elected officials abreast of their needs. Homeland Security is part of this program as well as knowing and working with our Police, and First Responders in cases of disasters from storms, floods, fires and other disasters.

Correction

A photo on page 15 in the December issue showing Minnesota Auxiliary members should have said they were at the National President’s homecoming.

NORTHERN TRAINING – Attendees to the American Legion Auxiliary Leadership Training Session held in Bemidji, led by Chairman Robin Dob, weathered a very stormy cold day, but managed to still came to the leadership training.

FRIDLEY CHRISTMAS – Junior Honorary President Diana Coleman-Woods, Department Commander Denise Milton, Auxiliary President Carol Kottom and Riders President Chuck Stone enjoy Christmas at the Fridley Post 302.

National Security Month

The National Security Program maintains and promotes a strong national defense by strengthening and supporting military servicemembers and their families. We support the emotional and social needs of active, reserve and transitioning military servicemembers and their families. Units may find servicemembers and families independently or by working with the servicemember transition program of the U.S. Department of Defense, the military service branches, or the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Members may provide support on a spouse-to-spouse or family-to-family basis, such as to a family member, neighbor or another military family to which they come in contact. Refer to the ALA Military Family Readiness Action Guide for additional information and specific steps.

Care packages and cards to our troops are always appreciated. Remember them throughout the year. Remember the family at home with visits, cards, and find out what kind of help they can use or need.

ANXIETY, PTSD, DEPRESSION RELATED TO MILITARY SERVICE

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:

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Funeral Plans for Veterans

Name: ____________________________
Address: ____________________________
City/State: ____________________________
Phone: ____________________________
Birth Date: ____________________________

President Carol Kottom’s Testimonial Dinner, March 25

Buffalo Post 270

Your choice of: Stuffed Pork Chop - OR - Stuffed Chicken Breast, Served with Baby red potatoes, Green beans and almonds, Cole Slaw & Dinner rolls
Coffee/Milk/Water, Dessert $16.00 per person

Karaoke to follow dinner

Name: ____________________________
Telephone number: ____________________________

Amount enclosed: ____________________________

Tickets will be at the door on March 25th

DEADLINE: March 18th

Mail check and info above to: Marilyn Miller, President, 404 Division St., Buffalo, MN, 55313 Phone: 763-682-4796

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Funeral Plans for Veterans

Name: ____________________________
Address: ____________________________
City/State: ____________________________
Phone: ____________________________
Birth Date: ____________________________
Heart of Alaska
July 14-21, 2017
Tour Includes:
- 4 Season Tour Director, Sue Barber
- Blended trip Delta Flights Minneapolis to Anchorage
- 12 Meals
- Denali Park Natural History Tour
- Alaska Railroad between Talkeetna & Denali Park
- Riverboat Discovery Cruise
- Gold Dredge #8
- Prince William Sound Cruise
- Mears Glacier
- Luggage handling for one suitcase
$3,299.00 per person double occupancy

Southern Charm of Savannah & Charleston
March 31-April 9, 2017
Tour Includes:
- 4 Season Tour Manager, Cindy Meany
- 9 nights accommodations
- Deluxe motor coach transportation
- 28 meals, 9 breakfasts, 4 lunches, 7 dinners
- 2 helicopter rides Savannah & Charleston, SC
- Biltmore Estates
- The Citadel
- Gospel Dinner Cruise
- Charleston Tea Plantation
- Magnolia Plantation
- Magnolia Garden
$1,950.00 per person double occupancy

Canadian Rockies
September 22-30, 2017
Tour Includes:
- 4 Season Tour Manager, Larry Abey
- Delta Airlines Rights Minneapolis to Vancouver, return Calgary to Minneapolis
- 9 nights accommodations
- 7 helicopter rides, 4 lunches, 5 dinners
- Biltmore Estates
- Banff Springs, 4 lunchs, 1 dinner
- Delta motor coach in Canada
- Tours of Vancouver, Moraine Lake, Lake Louise, Banff, Sulfur Mountain Gondola, Calgary, Glacier Tours
- $4,249.00 per person double occupancy

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