New state adjutant will start Jan. 1

Adjutant Randy Tesdahl, Elk River, has announced his retirement at the end of the year. He will be succeeded by Mike Maxa of Le Center.

In a statement from Department Commander Mark Dvorak to the membership, the commander said, “Adjutant Randy informed senior leadership that his doctors have recently advised him for health reasons to step down from his position.”

Tesdahl recently announced that he has been diagnosed with Parkinson’s Disease.

Dvorak said several meetings were held to talk over the situation. “After much discussion and reviewing several possible candidates for the adjutant position, it was decided on Sept. 16 that Mike Maxa…would be offered the position.”

Maxa accepted the position the following day.

Maxa is currently a Department’s First and Third District Commander representing the First and Third Districts. Last year, he served as Department Membership Director.

“The senior leadership was unanimous in this decision,” Dvorak said.

Maxa will serve as assistant to Tesdahl until he takes over the job at the first of the year. The Department Executive Committee will meet on Oct. 24, prior to the Fall Conference, to vote on the remaining two years and 10 months of the adjutant’s position. Officially, the adjutant’s position is voted on every three years by the membership.

New state veterans cemetery dedicated for the Duluth area

Minnesota’s third state veterans cemetery was dedicated recently at a site just northwest of Duluth. The new cemetery is expected to serve the northeastern part of the state. It will join existing cemeteries at Little Falls and Preston.

Gov. Tim Walz participated in the ceremony. “Here in Minnesota, we honor our veterans. The addition of the Minnesota State Veterans Cemetery in Duluth provides an option for veterans and their families in Northeastern Minnesota to choose a final resting place closer to home.”

Planning for the cemetery began a dozen years ago, and a grant proposal was made to the National Cemetery Administration in 2008. The Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs acquired the 104 acre parcel, about 14 miles north of Duluth.

A registration form for the Fall Conference is on Page 3 of this issue of the Legionnaire.
The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has announced the appointment of Breton M. Weintraub, M.D., F.A.C.P., the new director of the Fargo VA Health Care System.

"Dr. Weintraub has sound leadership qualities and proven experience," said Robert McDivitt, VA Midwest Health Care Network Director. "I am certain he will be an asset to our VISN, our employees and volunteers, our health care partners, the community, and importantly, for the Veterans we are honored to serve.

Weintraub has been with the Department of Veterans Affairs for over 17 years. He currently serves as the Chief of Staff for the VA Health Care System, Fargo, North Dakota. Weintraub holds a Medical Degree from the University of Cincinnati College of Medicine, Cincinnati, OH and a Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering from Cornell University, Ithaca, NY.

The Fargo VA Health Care System (HCS) is a Joint Commission accredited medical/surgical hospital with 36 acute care beds, a 38-bed Community Living Center, Primary Care and Specialty Clinics, and 10 Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs).

Fargo VA HCS CBOCs are located in North Dakota and northwestern Minnesota. The Fargo VA HCS oversees the provision of health care to more than 33,000 Veterans. The Medical Center is affiliated with the University of North Dakota School of Medicine and Health Sciences, providing training to medical students, and Internal Medicine, Psychiatry and Surgery Resident physicians.

The facility is also a training facility for nursing and allied health care students.

The VA Midwest Health Care Network, also known as Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) 23, is one of 18 Health Care Systems in the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Veterans Health Administration. The Network serves more than 440,000 enrolled Veterans residing in Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota and portions of Illinois, Kansas, Missouri, Wisconsin and Wyoming. Health care services are delivered through an integrated system of 9 hospitals, 69 community-based outpatient clinics, 8 community living centers and 4 domiciliary residential rehabilitation treatment programs.

The Network employs over 15,000 full-time employees and has an annual operating budget in excess of $3.3 billion.

Legion College class named

The 2019 Minnesota selectees into The American Legion College have been named. They are: Kelley Adelsman, Pine Island Post 184. Susan Edwards, Nisswa Post 627.

The college prepares students for future leadership.

New Director announced for Fargo VA HCS

BRETON WEINTRAUB

New vets cemetery dedicated

Continued from Page 1

The cemetery received a grant from the National Cemetery Administration totaling 8.35 million. The total cost of the project is about $9.8 million including property acquisition, design, construction and construction management.

The cemetery has been in use since Veteran’s Day this past year, and 176 veterans have been laid to rest there. The cemetery will serve about 32,000 veterans who live within 75 miles of the site.

Celebrate 75 years since the end of World War II

World War II Tour

12-Day tour departing June 2, 2020

- FRANCE: Paris city tour and three days in Normandy: Pointe du Hoc, omaha beaches, villagé, Utah Beach, Omaha Beach & more
- BELGIUM: Battle of the Bulge area
- GERMANY: Nuremberg, Dachau Concentration Camp, Hitler’s Eagle Nest & more

Only $3,295 from Chicago O’Hare

$100 OFF TOUR for veterans

Dignitaries, including Gov. Tim Walz, gathered in a forested place northwest of Duluth recently to dedicate the new Minnesota State Veterans Cemetery.

The cemetery will have initially 850 crypts, 407 traditional burial sites, 1,078 cremains sites and 720 columbarium niches.

The 19-acre site will include a main entrance, an administration building, a maintenance facility, roads, an assembly area, a committal shelter, and landscaping.

The cemetery will accommodate 32,000 gravesites when all the future phases are implemented.

For more information on the cemetery, contact Cory Johnson at 218-520-0120 or you can email him at cory.johnson@state.mn.us.

New Adjutant

Continued from Page 1

Maxa will begin his time as assistant adjutant on Oct. 7.

Department Communications Director Al Zdon will also be retiring at the end of the year, and Department Finance Liaison Laura Weber will be retiring next year.

The American Legion in the forefront.”

Minnesota Legionnaire

October 2019
Endorsements

Dr. Carl Moon endorsed for Department Vice Commander

Dr. Carl Moon has been endorsed for 6th and 9th Department Vice Commander by Kriesel Jacobson Post 560 in Zimmerman.

Moon served in the Air Force from 1976-1984. He is a Paid-Up-For Life Member with 31 years of continuous Membership.

He served as Post Commander two terms.

On the District level he served as District Commander, Vice Commander, County Council Commander and is currently the District Chaplain.

On the Department level he has served as Employment Chairman for four years.

On the National Level he is the National Commander’s Representative to the VA&R Commission and is one of only four members appointed to the TBI/PTSD Committee.

He is a member of ANAVICUS, Sons of the American Legion Squadron 560, 40 & 8 Voiture 414, and has a life membership in the DAV.

Moon has been employed at the St. Cloud VA as an Optometrist for 19 years.

Carl and his wife Peggy (Air Force Veteran and Past 6th District and Department Commander) have been married 45 years, have two daughters, two grandsons, and four granddaughters.

Department Executive Committee to meet

The Minnesota American Legion Department Executive Committee will meet prior to the Fall Conference in Mahnomen.

It will meet at 7 p.m. on Thursday, Oct. 24, at the Shooting Star Casino and Hotel in the Bejou/Detroit Lakes Room.

The DEC is comprised of this year’s and last year’s district commanders and many of the officers of the Minnesota Legion.

The committee will be voting on a new Department Adjutant and Third District Commander, and it will also be voting on replacing two members of the Department’s Board of Publications who had to resign to take vice commander positions.

2019 Fall Conference Official Registration

Mail to:
Dennis J Henleymeyer
PO Box L
Bagley MN 56621

Preregistration Sliding Fee:
Registration received by 01 Oct $15.00
Registration received after 01 Oct $18.00
Registration at the door $20.00

Registration is for each person attending except for Junior SAL and Junior Auxiliary members. Please copy and send a separate form for each person attending. Please make checks payable to:
Bagley American Legion Post 16

Conference Dates:
25 – 26 October 2019

Headquarters Hotel:
Shooting Star Hotel
777 SE Casino Road
Mahnomen MN
1-800-453-STAR

Contact the hotel directly to make your reservations

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MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

4 FANTASTIC WAYS TO EXPERIENCE MNHS

1. TELL US WHAT YOU THINK
Take our survey online and attend a public meeting to provide input on whether the current name of Historic Fort Snelling adequately reflects the expanded stories being shared there. Find meeting dates, times, and locations at mnhs.org/nameof.

2. VISIT THE FORT
Come learn about the expanded stories being shared at Historic Fort Snelling, see a demo, take a theme tour. Open Saturdays through October. Veterans and their families always receive free admission.

3. ATTEND WWII ROUND TABLE
Hear presentations on topics in World War II history. Upcoming: Diplomacy for the Atomic Bomb (Oct 8) and Difficulties of Coalition Warfare (Nov 12). Minnesota History Center, St. Paul.

4. RESEARCH MILITARY RECORDS
Visit the Gale Family Library at the Minnesota History Center to research records of Minnesotans’ military service in conflicts of the 19th and 20th centuries. Some items are available online at libguides.mnhs.org/milservice.

PLAN YOUR VISIT OR PURCHASE ONLINE • MNHS.ORG • 1-844-MNSTORY
Mail Call

Legionville

To the Editor:

We all know of the jewel of the state Legionville, but do we really know what it is and what it does. Legionville has been around for around 75 years. It has been moved a few times to different locations until it ended up by Brainerd, Minnesota. It is the only operation like this in the United States. It is the only Legion facility like its kind.

The Department of Minnesota has control over Legionville through the Legionville Corporation, which is run through the Legionville Executive board that has a representative from each District in Minnesota. Although the location of Legionville is in the 6th District, it is the responsibility of all the Legion Districts. Legionville provides various events and programs throughout the year from the Safety School, use of the area by the police and the Army National Guard of Minnesota and other events for The American Legion.

Legionville is an aging facility and needs some major repairs on the buildings and equipment. As we all know repairs cost large amounts of money and labor. The labor can be provided by all the districts and posts. Legion volunteers that have all sorts of life skills that can help on repairs, just call up Legionville and coordinate times and dates to do the repairs. We would be happy to stay in for your team a weekend can make a big difference.

The last request is directed to all the Minnesota Districts, districts and posts, S.A.L. and Riders: FUNDING, FUNDING, FUNDING. If the funds do not come in the Legion will be forced to close in the not too distant future. As we all know a donation is specified to go only to one of my projects. Please be generous with your donations.

For God and Country.

Richard Cross
Melrose

The Chief

To the Editor:

Thanks so much for your great article on Howard Nate. I was a huge Gopher Baseball fan when Dick Siebert coached the Gophers. And I personally got to know him when I worked at the Birman Athletic Building from 1973-76. Chief Siebert was the best.

Jim Hassing
St. Paul

PTSD is a strong indicator of a potential suicide. How well are we identifying those who have traumatic stress? The Minnesota VA is to be commended for beginning a new “Life There,” campaign that will encourage those in the community to take a stronger stand on veterans suicides. The VA will encourage community leaders, colleagues and even everyday people to reach out to their VA friends and families to help prevent suicides by showing support for those who are going through a rough time.

Jim Hassing
St. Paul

Thank you

Lane and Mary Stunkel
St. Paul

Several Districts have requested Revitalizations through National and some have been approved. Please continue to consider posts that could use help in having an Open House/Revitalization Keep monitoring through MyLegion.org the 1982s/ADs. Continue to get the message out about the upcoming Legion Act. At least I’ll tell you about exciting things getting done in the Districts, keep up the great work.

Update on my project: Two individuals from Wounded Warriors Guide Service came to the Harvest Rally in Legionville on September 7th. Their nonprofit was explained by Justin Lightfoot, who is the current Director of this nonprofit. There are 11 board members and are all volunteers and take no money for their services. All donations go toward helping disabled veterans through outdoor activities, providing all equipment for up to a five day outing. This past June they were able to provide outings for almost 100 veterans. The various events happen throughout the year, which include ice fishing. This nonprofit is a 501(c)3 and operate solely on donations, grants and fundrais- ing. This organization has been helping disabled veterans for 9 years. After Justin was done with his presentation, my wife was received a standing ovation. 75% of donations for my project will go to the Wounded Warriors Guide Service. 25% will go to the VA District 6. If you would like to make a donation to go to only one of my projects. Please be generous with your donations.

For God and Country.

Thank you

Lane and Mary Stunkel
St. Paul

A recent editorial in the Minnesota Star-Tribune nailed one aspect of the terrible veteran suicide rate on the head on all of us. The fact of the matter is that they will not immediately give a reason for why they want to end their life. The Department of Veterans Affairs to combat this national tragedy, it has to be all of us.

Veterans have every right to play a huge role in reducing these suicides, it cannot take on the problem alone. It’s a grim statistic that more than half of veterans who take their life don’t even contact the VA, at least about their mental challenges.

Over 6,000 veterans commit suicide each year, and the number is not getting any lower despite the fact that there are fewer veterans. While the number of younger veterans increased last year, still nearly 70 percent are veterans aged 50 and over. About 97 percent of the suicides were male.

So what can we do? Throwing money at the VA will be a tidy political response to the tragedy, but the fact is that the whole nation needs to be more strongly involved.

Part of it is simply taking care of our neighbors and our families. All of us need to be more aware of the symptoms of depression that can lead to suicide. So many stories you read in the press about how neighbors, friends and family had no idea that their loved one was about to do himself in. Maybe we should have an idea. Maybe all we need to be is a little better trained and sensitive to what propels a person to commit suicide.

Before that, much of the responsibility should be shou-dered by the military. Are we sure we’re recruiting the right people all the time to send around the world and be exposed to extremely stressful and dangerous missions? In the military, is the training sufficient for the situations the warrior finds himself or herself? Is it even possible to screen out every military, are they prop-erly screened for potential signs of future depression? It’s legendary that many who leave the service are so eager to get back into the military that they will neglect seeking a medical doctor or psychologist, is that they’re having some problems. It might delay their getting out.
Legal Clinics, Stand Down
The Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans will sponsor two legal clinics and a Stand Down for veterans.

- The legal clinics are open to low-income veterans and focus on benefits, debt collection and family law. The clinics include:
  - VA Medical Center, Minneapolis, Tuesday, Oct. 8, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.
  - St. Cloud VA Medical Center, Tuesday, Oct. 15, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. in the Auditorium in Building 8.

The Stand Down will be held on Saturday, Oct. 26, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. with a welcoming ceremony at 11:30 a.m. It will be held at the Mankato Civic Center and will provide services, including showers, haircuts, employment assistance and legal assistance. It is a kid-friendly event.

Round Tables
The St. Croix Valley Civil War Roundtable will be held Monday, Oct. 28, with the subject “Chickamauga, Sept. 19-20, 1863” with speaker Kevin Hampton. These are dinner meetings held on the first Tuesday of each month at Lowman Inn of Eagle River. There’s a social period at 5:30, dinner at 6, and the program at 7 p.m. Reservations can be made through Steve Anderson by calling 715-386-1268.

The World War II History Round Table will be held at the Minnesota History Center in St. Paul. The program will be on “Operation Dragoon and the Battle of Easy Red.” For more information, contact Bob Green, 763-323-0010. Please indicate number of tickets at $30 and your name.

Bingo
Money will be raised for a New Prague Veterans Memorial with a bingo fundraiser on Sunday, Oct. 27, with doors open at noon and bingo beginning at 1:30 p.m. It will be held at the New Prague Ballroom. Thirteen games will have prizes of $150 cash or more plus there will be a $750 first prize. There will be no viewing on TV or cooler. The coverall prize will be $1,000. Admission is $15 per person for 14 games.

Hellenic Anniversary
Minnepolis Hellenic Post 129 will celebrate its 100th anniversary on Saturday, Nov. 9, at St. Mary’s Greek Orthodox Church in south Minneapolis. Social hour and hors d’oeuvres will begin at 5:30 p.m. with the grand banquet dinner at 6:30. All are welcome. Tickets are $20. For more information, email nkoostis@gmail.com or Lindan-njoe@comcast.net. Post memorabilia will be on display.

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Retirement Party
A retirement party for Al Zed, the Legionnaire editor, will be held Friday, Nov. 15, at Anoka Post 102. The cost is $30 per person. The dinner will be a buffet of pulled pork and brisket, buns, garlic mashed potatoes, green beans almondine, garden salad and dessert.

There will be complimentary beer and soda until gone. There will be social hour from 5 with the dinner and program to follow. Nearby motels are the Country Inn and Suites, Coon Rapids 763-300-1797 and the Americiian, Coon Rapids, 763-323-0010.

Check should be payable to The American Legion and sent to Jenḧa, 11221 70 West 12th Street, Room 300A, St. Paul, MN 55155. Tickets should be reserved by Nov. 1.

Willow dinner
All veterans in the Willmar area are invited to the annual Veteran’s Day Dinner at the post home. It will feature locally-grown turkey and wild game. It was be served from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Monday, Nov. 11. For more information, call 320-235-0342.

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Please indicate number of tickets at $30 and your name.
Hello American Legion Family:

Thank you so much for the privilege of serving as your Riders’ Director. I know that there are big shoes to fill, but with your help and support, we will have a great year.

When you see Chuck Stone, thank him for everything he has done for the last three years.

We had a great time at our Rider’s ROMP in September. It was great to see everyone there having a good time. We use that time to get to know one another, and to see how other chapters and districts do things. New ideas are always good. Thank you Peggy Moon for conducting the installation.

There was also a lot of work done at the ROMP. The riders were able to get the benches set up, and three new deer stands were placed (thank you Austin Legion Riders for the awesome job that was done on those), trails were cleared up, and a lot of dead and hazardous trees were cut down and removed. We estimated over 180 person hours were put in over the weekend on various projects. It is a great example of the entire Legion family coming together for a common goal.

In the next year, I look forward to hearing about all of the things the riders do. I know the Legion runs gets a lot of recognition (as it should), but we also do so much more. I would like to hear from all of the chapters. Let us know what you are doing.

We will be sending out a Riders chapter report questionnaire. It will only be five questions, but it will help us get the word out about all of the things we accomplish during the year.

Lastly, I would like to thank Steve “Sully” Sullivan. If I wouldn’t have run into him at a fall conference so many years ago, I wouldn’t have this opportunity.

Here’s to keeping the storms in the rearview mirror.

By Paul Hassing
Department Director

American Legion Riders

Hello American Legion:

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has announced the appointment of Brent A. Thelen as the new director of the St. Cloud VA Health Care System.

“Dr. Thelen possesses sound leadership qualities and proven experience,” said Mr. Robert McDivitt, V A Midwest Health Care Network Director. “I am certain he will be an asset to our VISN, our employees and volunteers, our health care partners, the community, and importantly, for the Veterans we are honored to serve.”

Thelen has been with the Department of Veterans Affairs for over 16 years. He currently serves as the Director, Quality Management Systems/ISO Consultant Division (QCD-ICD) in Washington D.C.

Thelen holds a PhD in Engineering/Industrial Management from Columbia University, Master of Science in Business Administration from Central Michigan University and a Bachelor of Science in Industrial Engineering Technology from Southern Illinois University.

The St. Cloud VA Health Care System is headquartered at the St. Cloud VAMC in St. Cloud. VA Clinics are located in Alexandria, Brainerd and Montevideo, Minnesota. Services are delivered through outpatient clinics. The HCS provides primary and subspecialty medical, urgent, specialty and mental health care; acute psychiatry services; and extended care and rehabilitation services. The HCS also provides a number of specialty services including residential and outpatient mental health and substance abuse programs, a Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) treatment program, a Mental Health Residential Rehabilitation Treatment Program, outpatient programming for serious mental illness, homeless Veterans programs, a suicide prevention program, a Post 9/11 Transition and Care Management program, an Incarcerated Veteran Program, and a Veterans Justice Outreach Program. Extended Care and Rehabilitation services include Home-Based Primary Care, Adult Day Health Care, Memory Care, Hospice Care, Short Stay and Nursing Home Care, including ventilator care.

New director named at St. Cloud VA HCS

DR. BRENT THELEN

Legion Membership Chart as of Sept. 24

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<td>555</td>
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Table: Same Date Last Year

Minnesota Sons of the American Legion News

Sons of The American Legion

By Dave Vulcan
Detachment Commander

Hello from the Sons of The American Legion. It has been a very busy month as we all traveled to Indianapolis for the National American Legion family convention. A lot went on at the convention. The one thing that I think I should tell everybody about was the Sons of The American Legion voted to increase dues at the National level from $2 to $5. It seems like a lot of money but if you look at what we have not had a dues increase at National level for 30 some years. I feel that the organization will be stronger overall to be able to help support our organization at the National level.

Just two weeks after national we all traveled to Brainerd Minnesota to Legionville School Patrol Camp for Camporee and Fall Harvest Rally. A lot got done for the camporee and it was very well attended. I would like to say thank you to Commander Mark, President Mary, Honorary Junior President Emmy, and State Director Chuck for attending the rally on Saturday. We all had a very good time standing and watching the Forest Lake Legion do a flag retirement ceremony before the rally started. I’ve only ever seen this done once before. It brought tears to my eyes to see all the Legion family standing there for this event. I also would like to say a big thank you to the Camporee Committee from Sons of The American Legion and the other volunteers that worked so hard to put that event on, and got so much done at the camp.

The next week, Cdr. Dave Vulcan traveled back to Brainerd to take part in the Minnesota American Legion Riders Romp at Legionville School Patrol Camp. I also would like to say thank you to all the Legion Riders that helped work on the trails and put out some new deer stands for the John Zgoda Memorial SAL Disabled Veteran Deer Hunt. Thanks. A big thank you goes out to APR Chapter 91 of Austin for donating three new deer stands. Until next month, thank you to all for your hard work.

Volunteers move logs to clear the trails for the John Zgoda Deer Hunt at Legionville Camp.

Cdr. Dave Vulcan; d Evelucan@gmail.com
Adjutant Dennis Henkemeyer: dennish56621@hotmail.com
Website: www.mnsal.org

DR. BRENT THELEN

The very next week, I traveled back to Brainerd to take part in the ROMP. The riders were able to get the benches set up, and three new deer stands were placed (thank you Austin Legion Riders for the awesome job that was done on those), trails were cleared up, and a lot of dead and hazardous trees were cut down and removed. We estimated over 180 person hours were put in over the weekend on various projects. It is a great example of the entire Legion family coming together for a common goal.

In the next year, I look forward to hearing about all of the things the riders do. I know the Legion runs gets a lot of recognition (as it should), but we also do so much more. I would like to hear from all of the chapters. Let us know what you are doing.

We will be sending out a Riders chapter report questionnaire. It will only be five questions, but it will help us get the word out about all of the things we accomplish during the year.

Lastly, I would like to thank Steve “Sully” Sullivan. If I wouldn’t have run into him at a fall conference so many years ago, I wouldn’t have this opportunity.

Here’s to keeping the storms in the rearview mirror.

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September 11, 2019 Membership Report

The Legion leadership gathered at Legionville for the Camporee and Fall Harvest Rally. From left: Riders’ Director Paul Hassing, Auxiliary President Mary Hendrickson, SAL Commander Dave Vulcan, Honorary Junior President Emily Suess and Commander Mark Dvorak.
Harvest Rally at Legionville

The Harvest Rally was held at Legionville as part of the Camp-O-Ree experience, and sponsored by the Sons of the American Legion.

The Legion honored posts in each district for achieving the best percentage thus far. The membership directors and posts honored included:
- Mary Fargen, Post 570; Duane Blake, Post 185; Timothy Sellner, Post 380; Jim Hassing, Post 406; Larry Anderson, Post 396; Donald Imberi, Post 443; Earl Pederson, Post 180; Omar St. Lawrence, Post 138; Ron Hendrickson, Post 31; Tenth District, no report.

Quilts of Valor presented quilts to honored Legion members.

Commander Mark Dvorak had Justin Lightfoot explain one of his projects, the Wounded Warriors Guide Service.

Photos by Dennis DeLong

Commander Dvorak spoke to several district gatherings. Sixth District Commander Paul Edwards listened in.

Adjutant Randy Tesdahl provided some musical entertainment prior to the rally.

Auxiliary Chair Sharon Thiemecke looked on as Honorary Junior President Emily Suess spoke.

Auxiliary leaders showed off their posters and how far their mining for members had progressed. From left: First District, Wanda Prescher; Second District, Raleen Tolzmann; Third District, Kim Carlander; Fifth District, Jill Davis; Sixth District, Bev Grose; 8th District, Jennifer Havlick; Ninth District, Jan McDonald; 10th District, Betty Brown.

Riders Director Paul Hassing brought greetings as Membership Director Sy Fix looked on.
BOYD SORENSON

In training with the Royal Canadian Air Force

BOYD SORENSON

At home in Waite Park

Boyd Sorenson wanted to get into the war in 1941 and so he traveled north to Canada to train in the Royal Canadian Air Force. Before he could fly a mission for Canada, he transferred to the U.S. Army Air Corps. Sorenson flew 152 combat missions for the United States in two wars.

By Al Zdon

Oyd Sorenson started life as a farmer, and retired 84 years later as a farmer.

In between, he flew 152 combat missions for the United States in two wars.

He learned how to fly by joining the Royal Canadian Air Force.

And he once gave a lift to Mickey Rooney along the Korean front lines.

Boyd W. Sorenson was born on the Minnesota/South Dakota border near Pipestone in 1922.

“We had a typical farm. We had cows and hogs and chickens. We raised crops for the cows mainly, corn, oats and barley. We had no running water, but we had a windmill so the water came into the house in pails.”

“I remember the straw piles. They stood about 10 feet high and we used the straw for the cows. But the hogs would get into them to have their little ones. And in the winter, the pheasants would sit on top of them because they knew nobody would shoot at them.”

His education was at a country school house about a mile and a half away. At some point in his early educational career, his mother signed him up for piano lessons with a neighbor who lived a half mile in the other direction. “That made for a pretty long walk every day.”

The school was taught by those who had just graduated of us drove down, but I celebrated a little too much the night before the Armistice Day Storm in 1940. “I didn’t get through the night in one piece.”

His teen years were during the 1930s. “I remember bad weather, a bad deal, and a big depression. But families helped families. I know there was a lot of moving around as the farms failed.”

For a few years, we did everything by hand. We butchered our own cows and chickens. There were two really tough years I remember and then it got a little bit better.”

High School was at Pipestone, and Sorenson played track, football and basketball. In the summers he would work for neighboring farmers. “And there were always chores: Milk the cows by hand, feed the chickens, bring in the water. In 1937, REA (Rural Electrical Association) came in and then we had running water.”

After high school, Sorenson attended Mankato State Teachers College for a year. “I enjoyed playing football, but after the football season I got a little lax on going to class. Finally the Dean of Men called me in and said if I didn’t attend every class the rest of the year, there would be no football next year. That got my attention.”

He washed clothes and scrubbed floors at a Mankato restaurant, working three hours a day and getting no money but three meals. It was a good arrangement until he was fired for missing work when he was caught at his parent’s home during the Armistice Day Storm in 1940. “I didn’t get back to Mankato until Wednesday. My boss got caught in the storm and didn’t get back to town until Friday, but when he found out I had missed those days, he fired me on the spot.”

He got a job at another restaurant working two hours a day for two meals.

As he finished his year at college in 1941, he got a letter from his brother saying he should come out to California because there were plenty of jobs. “So I hitchhiked out to California. The first place I applied at hired me.”

It was a can company in Los Angeles, and it was Sorenson’s job to glue the tops and bottoms on the cans. He met some friends, including one who was a stunt man in Hollywood, and the friends were taking flying lessons. “I met the instructor, and he took me up a couple of times. I’d never been in an airplane and it was fun.”

Someone heard that the Canadian government was recruiting pilots and the four of them, the three young men and the instructor, decided flying military planes was their destiny. Canada and England had been in World War II for two years, and pilots were needed.

The Canadian recruiting station was at the legendary Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel. “The problem was that my friends we all 21 and didn’t need permission to join the Royal Canadian Air Force. I had just turned 19, and I did.”

The four of them drove north. “There were no motels in those days, but people would just take you in and you slept in their living room or whatever.”

They ended up in British Columbia. “I wrote my folks asking for permission to join the Royal Canadian Air Force, and they wouldn’t do it. So I just hung around for a couple of weeks while my friends started school.”

One night, he was out with some locals. “They decided they could work with my birth certificate and make it say I was 21. And you know what, it worked just fine.”

He signed up and the Canadians sent him to the University of Edmonton for three months. But in December, Pearl Harbor happened, and now the United States was in the war.

“Word got around that all Americans should go down to Calgary and sign up for the U.S. Army Air Corps. So some of us drove down, but I celebrated a little too much the night before. In the morning I took my physical, and I flunked because my blood pressure was too high.”

So it was back to the RCAF and flight school. The school was located at the High River airport in Alberta, and the trainees flew Tiger Moths, an English bi-plane that was the primary trainer for the Canadians.

Sorenson was eager to learn to fly, but there was one problem. His instructor hated Americans with a passion. “He wanted to wash me out right away, but I tried not to pay much attention to that. But the other students, who were Canadian, were flying every day, and I was only flying every other day or so. I was getting behind.”

On one training session, the instructor told Sorenson to take off, something he hadn’t done before. “I was a little
erratic, and he was barking at me, yelling at me, saying, ‘If you can’t do better, I’m going to whup your ass.’

“I replied, ‘When we get on the ground, we’ll see about that.’

“I made a half-assed, decent landing and he told me to park the airplane. After I parked it, he was nowhere around.”

But evidently, the mid-air altercation had been reported, and Sorenson was called in to see the chief instructor. He was told that another instructor was short a student. “I said, ‘That’s fine if he wants to teach me to fly.’”

Sorenson finally soloed, but he was still behind his fellow students. “On the day we were to leave, I had to go up and fly for two hours to get in my required time. The bus was waiting for me.”

After that, training went much better. Flying now was in the Harvard II, which was the British version of the A-6 Texan, the standard trainer for the U.S. Army Air Corps, or the SNJ, the Navy trainer. The training base was in Weyburn, Saskatchewan.

“I graduated above grade. In fact I ended up as the squadron leader. Half the students in my group were from Trinidad.”

Sorenson had over 200 hours of flight time when he got his wings and orders to England. To that point, he had been a “leading aircraftsman” or a sergeant, and now he became a “pilot officer,” the equivalent of a second lieutenant.

His transportation to the war was on the HMS Queen Elizabeth, the one-time luxury liner that had been converted to transporting troops. “I think there were 15,000 of us on board. I was in a small stateroom with 15 other guys. I had the top bunk, and my nose was just a few inches from a lightbulb. I threatened to take it down, but the guys needed light in the room. In the end, I was so tired I slept anyway.”

The trip on the high-speed liner only took five days, and the new pilots were sent to a hotel in Bournemouth, along England’s southern coast.

Lord Haw Haw was a German radio propagandist who tried to hurt the Allies’ morale during the war. “The day we got to Bournemouth, Lord Haw Haw gave us a welcoming speech on the Radio. He said there would be another greeting for us soon.

“Later that day, the air raid siren went off, and I looked out my second floor window and saw three German Me-109s coming at us. I ducked behind the radiator in the room, but I don’t know how much good that would have done.”

Fortunately, the German attack did not cause any casualties, but two days later the German fighters came again and riddled the hotel with bullets. “The English got us out of there and put us in a private home.”

The new pilots were not assigned yet, but could fly their old friends the Tiger Moths at a local airport for practice. “It was something for us to do.”

Next stop was Wales, where they began training on a British fighter, the Hawker Hurricane. The new base was something of a culture shock for the Americans.

“I was surprised. Nearly all the work at the base was done by women. The men were off fighting, and the women took over the other jobs.

“I had a private room, and the women brought warm water every morning. They pressed our clothes, and shined our shoes. All the meals were prepared by the women and girls. They drove us out to the airport. And they pulled the planes out so we could fly them.”

Sorenson took an immediate liking to the Hurricane. “I loved that plane. It was so easy to fly.”

It was now the beginning of 1943, and once the new pilots were checked out on the Hurricane, they waited expectantly for their orders. When the orders came, it was a major letdown. Instead of joining the fighting in Europe, they were all sent to Burma.

“All the pilots got a week off before shipping out. The English went home to their families, and the Canadians all seemed to have somewhere to go. I just went down to London and stayed at a big hotel.”

While drowning his sorrows one night at the hotel bar, he ran into two American majors who worked for the U.S. Headquarters in London. “I talked to them about my problems, how I really didn’t want to go to Burma. So they said to me, ‘Why don’t you just transfer to the U.S. Army Air Forces?’ I said it was kind of short notice to be doing something like that, and they said, ‘Well, we’ll take care of that.’”

And they did. The next day, Sorenson took his physical, resigned from the Canadian Royal Air Force, joined the Army Air Corps and went down and purchased U.S. Army officer uniforms.

Sorenson was commissioned a first lieutenant in the Air Corps and sent back to Wales for more training. His new plane was not anything like the sleek Hurricane. It was the P-47 Thunderbolt.

The Thunderbolt was a heavily armored American fighter that was called “The Jug,” by pilots, because its profile was much like a milk jug. “It was an odd looking plane. But it was a lot of airplane, and it had a lot of protection for the pilot.”

He joined the 78th Fighter Group, 83rd Fighter Squadron which was based out of Duxford, a major air base...
just south of Cambridge.

“We were practicing low flying when the engine quit. I managed to level off, got the aircraft and tried to switch fuel tanks, but that didn’t work.”

The P-47 narrowly missed several trees as Sorenson tried to maneuver a 360° turn. He made a big turn. He had a great shot at him. I missed him. But I had a pretty good angle on him and I shot again. And I missed him again. And then I missed him again.

But now we were very close to the ground, and he just bailed out. But his chute never opened. I had it on my gun camera, him hitting the ground.”

Later, near Koblenz, Sorenson was leading a mission and was out destroying 29 German Junkers 188s on the ground. Sorenson got credit for three of the kills.

It was during this time that he lost a good friend. “His name was Lt. Peel, and they had sent him home to get well. When he got back he wasn’t ready to fly anymore. He was drinking heavily and he threw himself out of a second story window, but he was so drunk, he didn’t even hurt himself.

“But then a few days later, he disappeared into some clouds and he never came back. We all figured it was a suicide.”

Sorenson who had told his stories calmly to this point in the interview, teared up and his voice broke as he recalled Lt. Peel. “He was a hell of a nice guy.”

After D-Day, Boyd “volunteered” to do skip bombing, the bright idea of some American strategists. The Germans would hide their trains during the day in railroad tunnels, and the plan was to fly in low and skip the bombs into the tunnel.

“The problem was that if you came in too low, the bomb would just bounce up and maybe hit the aircraft. If you released too high, it would just hit the mountain side. Either way it was very dangerous.

“I was the last guy in the formation, and I watched how they released their bombs, too low or too high. I thought I had it figured out by the time it was my turn. Did he skip his bomb into the tunnel? “I don’t know, I was the last guy. I couldn’t see it and nobody else could. We did skip bombing one more time, and then they called it off entirely.”

Sorenson said there was a premium at one point in 1944 to blow up the locomotives on enemy trains, but the practice was halted. “We were killing too many Frenchmen.”

By this time Sorenson had over 300 combat hours and 89 missions. He was finally taken off the line.

“They had me talking to new B-17 crews that were coming in, giving them a first-hand account of what they were in for. I did two crews in the morning and two in the afternoon.”

An old P-47 was put at his disposal so he could still get his flight time in. “They had removed all the armor and plating, and you know what, it was a beautiful plane to fly.”

At one point, he even got to be a co-pilot on a B-17, a huge four-engined bomber.

On one flight taking off from Ireland, an engine quit and the crew was barely able to get the plane stopped before it ran out of runway. The tires were shredded from the emergency stop. “We had two nurses on board, and I remember one of them jumping out of the plane and she was talking to me and telling me to fly 1 mile. I looked at her and she was peeing at the same time. They weren’t there the next day.”

His job was to help form a unit of airmen and men that would take over German airports as they were captured by the advancing Allied troops. “But the Battle of the Bulge put an end to that. There were no captured airports.”

In December, 1944, Sorenson was sent home and spent time in Arizona, California and Texas. Just before the war ended, the Army announced its points system for getting out, and Sorenson had plenty of points.

He went back to Pipestone and ran his own flight school for a time. The local people wanted an armory in Pipestone, but they had to have an officer in charge. Suddenly Sorenson was an officer in the National Guard infantry. When the Korean War broke out, Sorenson was called up and given orders to Germany. At the time his wife, Phyllis, was pregnant. “My mother-in-law was incensed that they would send me away when my wife was pregnant.”

“She said I should do something about it. I told her that even if they did keep me at home, as soon as the baby was born they’d send me to Korea.”

In this case, he was a prophet. The Army allowed him to stay home, and the week the baby was born, he was off to Korea.

By this time, the war had stalemated along a static line in much of Korea. Sorenson’s job was to fly a small plane, the Cessna L-19, over enemy lines. He was in the 5th Regimental Combat Team and later flew for the 25th Division.

Some times the mission was having another soldier in the back who threw out surrender leaflets to the enemy. Otherwise it was spotting for artillery.

Did the enemy take pot shots at him? “Oh, yeah, all the time. But what bothered me was that our own guys would shoot at us too. I don’t know what they were thinking. They would even hit us once in a while.”

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Boyd and Phyllis were married during the war.

Sorenson gets ready to climb into his Cessna L-19 to do a leaflet mission over enemy lines in Korea.

Sorenson in England during World War II.

Sorenson lives in an apartment in Waite Park.

Sorenson lives in England during World War II. Probably his most memorable mission was to fly the actor Mickey Rooney from one spot along the line to another so he could do a USO show. “He was only a few inches above the ground, and got in the plane, got strapped down, and didn’t say a word to any of us.”

Back home, Sorenson ended his military career. He had flown 152 missions, earned an Air Medal with three oak leaf clusters in Europe and two more clusters in Korea. He had served his country in two wars.

He went back into farming, and Phyllis worked at the National Monument in Pipestone. They had four children.

Sorenson lives in an apartment in Waite Park.
SECOND DISTRICT PICNIC — The Second District held its annual family picnic and invited the residents and staff of the Luverne Veterans Home. The event was held at the East Side Acres near Round Lake. The picnickers enjoyed pontoon rides.

BACKUS INSTALLATION — The Backus Auxiliary Unit 368 installed new officers.

FALLDIN HONORS — Minneapolis Falldin Post sponsored Charles Astedt as a guardian for his father on an Honor Flight this year. George Astedt, right, is a World War II and Korean War veteran.

QUILTS OF VALOR — The Quilts of Valor group recently presented a quilt to John Henkemeyer, a World War II Navy veteran. Presenting were Paul Evenson and Linda Novotny.

EDEN VALLEY FLOAT — Eden Valley Post 381 had a 100th anniversary float in the Valley Daze Parade.
FAIRMONT HONORS — Fairmont Post 36 honored longtime members with plaques. From left: Commander Steve Fosness, C.V. Smith, Ellis Saxton, Richard B. Johnson, Second District Commander Cindy Brunk.

PARTNERSHIP — The American Legion, through its Rehabilitation Committee, partnered with the Hopkins Elks to help a veteran secure and furnish a place to live. Above is a sample kit household presented to a veteran.

EAGAN LEADS THE WAY — The award winning color guard from Eagan Post 594 leads the way in the Eagan 4th of July parade.

MILLERVILLE HONOR — Commander Jim Otto presented a membership award to Dennis Otto for 50 years of service.

DULUTH DEDICATION — The City of Duluth recently dedicated a new memorial to World War I veterans.

SAVAGE SCHOLARSHIPS — Savage Post 643 presented nine $1,000 scholarships to graduates from the area. The recipients also were entertained at a banquet.

NEW WORLD WAR I PLAQUE — Gov. Tim Walz signed into a law a bill that will create a new plaque for the Court of Honor at the Capital. Attending were veterans from across the state including Commander Mark Dvorak, second from left.

RIDERS AT RALLY — The Minnesota American Legion Riders turned out at the Harvest Rally at Legionville to help support the safety patrol camp.
Greetings from the First District American Legion family

The national convention is now in the history book. What a great gathering of American Legion family members throughout the whole 55 departments. The Legionville Camp-O-Ree is also now behind us. A wonderful place to have a big gathering for fun, food, fundraising, work, camaraderie and a rally. The dome brings back memories of staying in open bay barracks.

Today, I am writing a letter. Fall rallies, membership dinners, school programs and soon Veteran day programs are coming.

Membership—the Legion Act has opened eligibility for many: Legion, Sons of the American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary and the Legion Riders. Anyone with questions or comments bring them forward. That may be what gets someone to join or become active.

Get speakers to come to rallies, talk about forms of communication, email, Facebook, Twitter, Newsletter.

Talk about the four pillars, the foundation of The American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary and the Legion Riders.

Pray for our deployed around the world that are helping keep peace. Help the families of the deployed.

Veterans, thank you for your service. Families: thank you for your support.

Hello Fellow Legionnaires. The Third District just finished up its first rally (Family Gathering) of the year. We played Legion Jeopardy, which was a good learning experience.

As of the last bulletin, the Third District is in 1st place in membership. Keep working the 1982 lists that were provide.

Friday night, also print new lists as they can change. One of the Commanders in the Third District has started calling 2-3 members of his post per week, some that have not renewed and some that have renewed, just to keep the Post in touch with the members of his post. This is a great idea, hopefully other posts will do the same.

Several posts are having anniversary dinners or parties this fall, this is a great way to get the Legion name into the community and tell our story. Not only is the Legion 100 years old, but the Auxiliary will be 100 on November 10, 2019. Help many organizations can boast this milestone, keep telling our story.

Membership is very important to our American Legion family. I am asking that everyone approach veterans as well as other family members. I urge all district commanders and membership directors to have the new applications available. The new application will have Legion Act across the front. They can be found on the website mylegion.org also. The legion is asking that we use these forms from now on.

There are many veterans that need our help. For example, those that are homeless, ones suffering from PTSD and physical illnesses. The VA has increased its availability and is trying to see more patients. We need to be there for our brothers and sisters.

I would like to see as many of you as possible at the Fall Conference of the Nevada Department at the shooting Star Casino on October 25th & 26th.

The design for the new National World War I Memorial on Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington, D.C., received final approval on Thursday from the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts (CFIA).

“Today marks a day that all who have worked hard to bring the National World War I Memorial in Washington, D.C., from concept to reality are very happy to see,” said Terry Hamby, chairman of the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts.

Commander Andrew Roos Sr.

The 5th District is pleased and utmost proud to welcome a new Post, Patrick M. Novack Post 5222 into its ranks, with Teresa Huberty as its Commander.

Their work which included a successful fundraiser, and donations to the Veterans Home shows that they will be a welcome addition to the District. She and the new Commanders can’t wait to get started.

We finished last at the Legionville rally, but Membership Director Wade Larson along with the 5th District will rectify this short-term condition. We are now gearing up for our revitalization program(s).

We now have to say goodbye to our friend and long time Commander Nick Kakos, who passed away on September 16th.

Those of you who knew him, remember him for his work with Legionville and his leadership at the Minneapolis Veterans Home and Memorial Day programs, that he was so proud of. I haven’t touched on many of the works, Nick has done but I will tell Wile Done, TWO.

Don’t forget to visit the hospitals, nursing homes and those convalescing at home.

Greetings from the 6th District Commander.

Our membership year is off to a good start and even though not all Districts were able to get off the Goose Egg, we need to strive always work for the good of The American Legion. As we talk to potential new members, I have heard from numerous people that they feel that The American Legion talks membership issues too much and that some of them feel that we are forgetting their concerns. We need to always work for the good of The American Legion programs. Sometimes, it takes people to serve breaks, wash dishes or mow the lawn. The more members we have, the more likely Congress will listen when we talk about Veteran’s concerns.

Last item for this month: As District Commander, I receive the National Security reports. In every report, a list is included of the number of remains that have been identified and repatriated. I encourage Commanders and Chaplains to add to the POW-MIA ceremony a moment of thanks to Our Creator for bringing these honored warriors home.

Have a great month. Be active. The Legion needs you.

Greetings from your 8th District Commander.

I apologize for not having a September posting, but there was a death in my family and I had to go to Florida. It was too hectic for me to post that column. My email is: koskinen@earthlink.net

I encourage District, Posts, Adjutants or Commanders to contact me with their regular meeting schedule, and I will try to attend the Post meetings that I can. I also encourage our rank and file members to contact me with suggestions and comments about Legion and veteran issues.

There are many things going on and up-coming. I’m sure the rank and file are interested and have some input.

The 8th and 10th Districts meeting is coming on the 19th of October at the Fridley Post. The Department Fall Conference is on the 24th to 26th of October in Mahnomen at Shooting Star Casino. Please if you can attend these events; greater attendance provides more context in discussions; contact me if needed for any details.

With the passage of the LEGION Act, members are encouraged to talk amongst your veteran friends to offer their Legion membership to the Legion. The Legion is now asking that we use these forms from now on.

September is almost gone, time is flying by. Almost time to buy pumpkins.

Went to National in Indiana and had a good time. I learned a lot and ate a lot of good food.

I came home and headed for Legionville. We had steak dinner Thursday night put on by 1st District. Pig roast on Friday by 10th District. Saturday noon fish fry put on by 6th District. Saturday night dinner by SAL, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday breakfast by SAL. Thank you for all the good food. Too bad for those who didn’t make it to Legionville this year. You missed a lot of fun and good food.

10th District had a gathering on Saturday at 1:00 pm and several Quilts of Valor were handed out. I was one of the many to receive the Honor Quilt. All Department officers showed up and gave greetings. Thank you.

Veronica’s husband picked her up on Saturday and announced he is running for Department Commander next year. Good luck Tom.

With the passage of the LEGION Act, members are encouraged to talk amongst your veteran friends to offer their Legion membership to the Legion.

Membership is very important to our American Legion family. I am asking that everyone approach veterans as well as other family members. I urge all district commanders and membership directors to have the new applications available. The new application will have Legion Act across the front. They can be found on the website mylegion.org also.

The legion is asking that we use these forms from now on.

There are many veterans that need our help. For example, those that are homeless, ones suffering from PTSD and physical illnesses. The VA has increased its availability and is trying to see more patients. We need to be there for our brothers and sisters.

I would like to see as many of you as possible at the Fall Conference of the Nevada Department at the shooting Star Casino on October 25th & 26th.
Minnesota proudly accepted the following National awards at our 2019 National Convention.

**Legislation**

- Best Department Program – Northwestern Division – Mary Henderson, Chairman
- Children and Youth Most Outstanding Unit Program - Northwestern Division – Hayfield Unit #930

**Public Relations**

- Outstanding Department Program – Northwestern Division – Cheryl Nymann, Chairman

**Education**

- Best Department Program – Northwestern Division – Linda Kropuenske, Chairman
- History Best Department History – Northwestern Division – Karla Otterness, Chairman
- Poppy National Poppy Poster Contest – Paytin Nelson
- Education Class VAVS – Perfect Attendance Award
- Membership Groups

**National Appointments**

Following are the National Appointments that National President Nicole Clapp has made to serve with her this 2020-2022 year.

- Norma Tramm National Legislative Chairman
- Sandy Fredrickson National Poppy Vice Chairman
- Marsha Bible Eastern Division Chairmanships

**National Awards**

- Most Outstanding Unit Program – Northwestern Division – Ash Lake
- Most Outstanding Child/Youth Program – Northwestern Division
- Best Department Program – Northwestern Division – Mary Henderson, Chairman

**National Service**

- Raleigh Tolzmann National Auxiliary, Member
- Carl Yarvis

**Support**

- Raleigh Tolzmann
- Carl Yarvis

**Notes**

- Raleigh Tolzmann
- Carl Yarvis

**Conclusion**

- Raleigh Tolzmann
- Carl Yarvis
Those kids grow up so quick and we seem to stay the same. What an honor. Frankie worked very hard at getting that scholarship and a scholarship for Non-Traditional Students. We will have those at Fall Conference along with $25.00. This is a great Christmas gift for friends and family.

100th Anniversary Cookbooks available for purchase for Mahnomen at Fall Conference.

For those of you coming to Fall Conference, stop in our office to say hi. Shorty and I are planning a short trip to Texas the end of October as our first born granddaughter is 167 recently honored Eleanor Nelson on her 102nd birthday. Family will be involved.

We have another surprise in store for you - Connie Lee and her band will be performing for everyone. Connie has toured with the Grand Ole Opy and now is dedicating her life serving Veterans. This should be a great show – bring your dancing shoes, or Second District, whatever you can come up with.

First I want to introduce our new Administrative Assistant, Jocelyn Yasis to you all. Jocelyn left her position at the South Metro Federal Credit Union to join Jan and myself. What a blessing she is turning out to be. She is handling all of the incoming phone calls and is learning the membership area. For those of you coming to Fall Conference, stop in our office to say hi. Shorty and I are planning a short trip to Texas the end of October as our first born granddaughter is...
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