National Commander Oxford describes how youth programs influence communities and America

By Tim Engstrom

ADAMS — A tour of southern Minnesota with 12 stops all began one mile north of the Iowa border, at Adams Post 146 with 100 people attending.

The American Legion National Commander James W. “Bill” Oxford said Minnesota was the 26th department he had visited since his term began in August. The traveling started in early September, and he and his aide, Larry Clinte of Lincoln, Post 30 in North Carolina, have had five days at home since.

Oxford is a paid-up-for-life member and past commander of Post 29 in Lenoir, North Carolina. He was Department of North Carolina commander in 2010-11. In the Marine Corps, he was an aviation electronic technician for the A-6 Intruder, serving in Vietnam. He was discharged as a sergeant in 1970, then joined the North Carolina National Guard. He attended officer candidate school and transferred to the Army Reserve. He retired as a colonel after 34 years, nine months and 10 days of military service.

“My only regret is I only had 34 years, nine months and 10 days to give,” Oxford said. His theme for his term is “A Foundation for the Future.” He has been married to his wife, Frances, since 1967. They have a son, Charles (married to Deah Reid), and a daughter, Jackie (married to Mike Carr). They also have four grandsons.

Twelve stops? Yes. Here is the recap:

Monday, Feb. 17
Adams Post 146: Breakfast banquet

Tuesday, Feb. 18
Waseca Post 228: Lunch banquet

Wednesday, Feb. 19
Gaylord Post 433: Breakfast banquet

National Commander Bill Oxford meets a New Prague police officer who provided an escort into town.

Legion at Twins set for May 9

MINNEAPOLIS — The 20th annual American Legion Family Night with the Minnesota Twins has been determined.

It takes place Saturday, May 9, at 6:10 p.m. Department of Minnesota Commander Mark Dvorak will throw out the first pitch. Another Legionnaire will raise the flag.

Box high seats are $32, while Infield Box high seats are $43. There is a service fee added to each order.

When ordering, be sure to provide Post information (usually, the city and Post number) so that each Post can receive recognition on the scoreboard during the game.

Seating is limited, and tickets are available on a first-come, first-served basis. The purchase deadline is April 18.

Veterans Day on the Hill aims to be later and more effective

Veterans Day on the Hill is later in the legislative calendar than it has been in the past. This year, it is set for April 20. But there is a reason for the later date, said Trent Dilks, adjutant for the Disabled American Veterans Department of Minnesota and event organizer.

“The reality of the legislative process is that not every bill is going to make it,” he said. “Having it later, we can focus on the few bills that have made it through the process and stand a chance of being passed.”

Being an election year means there will be more politicking than usual as lawmakers seek to motivate their bases and their donors, Dilks noted.

The challenge for veterans is to show numbers and that we will vote according to veterans issues. Dilks said that too often veterans legislation will die quiet deaths because there isn’t much opposition.

“We don’t have a bad guy, so we are fighting complacency at the Capitol,” he said.

How? Well, every committee passes every veterans-related bill, because everyone says they support veterans, but then the measures magically don’t get added to the big omnibus bills that end
he participated in the transfer of remains from Punchbowl Crater National Cemetery to the POW/MIA Accounting Agency. “It made me proud to be an American,” he said, adding that he liked the enthusiasm the scientists had for their jobs.

With the remains they would identify, often with bits as small as a coin, the person to whom they belong. He urged veterans to provide their DNA to the VA, which can use it to identify remains.

In Taiwan, Oxford was welcomed by the president, Tsai Ing-wen. She welcomed the national commander the same as any dignitary. Oxford described Taiwan as the most important American ally in the region, and he was there to reinforce the decades-old friendship.

In Australia, he met with the governor-general, David Hurley, who is appointed by the Queen of the United Kingdom. Hurley took Oxford on a tour of the estate of the executive mansion in a golf cart. Oxford appreciated that the chief guy drove the cart himself and described the grounds.

He told the story of his travels to emphasize a point: “The American Legion is more than 100 years old, and yet it is just as valuable, important and relevant as when it started.”

Present-day Legionnaires are the future of the organization, he said. “We have the ability to impact the future of our country. We have the ability to impact the future of our youth programs,” Oxford said.

He said Legion Baseball fields 55,000 players (and 80 in the Baseball Hall of Fame, with 50 percent of MLB players having played Legion Baseball). There are 18,000 Boys State delegates and 14,000 Girls State delegates (President Bill Clinton was a Boys State delegate). The Oratorical Contest brings in 10,000 participants (Vice President Mike Pence was a state champion). Add in 60,000 scholars. Plus many young people are in other Legion-related activities such as shooting sports. That comes to 200,000.

Take that number five years forward and five years back, that’s now 2 million children. But it takes members to run the programs, he said.

The all-time high for membership was 3.3 million in 1946. The goal this year is around 1.8 million. He said the Legion Act opened membership to 4.2 million new veterans.

“I guarantee everyone knows someone who is eligible for membership who is not a Legionnaire,” Oxford said. In addition, it would strengthen The American Legion’s voice in the nation’s capital. Politicians would pay greater attention to 3.5 million veterans instead of 2 million.

He highlighted some of the legislative success The American Legion has had over the years: the existence of the VA, the G.I. Bill, the U.S. Flag Code, Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation efforts — primarily training for American Legion service officers who work tirelessly to help veterans and families understand their health-care benefits, education and employment opportunities. Many posts along the tour donated to the project.

Donations can be made at www.legion.org/donate.

On suicide: ‘Say something’

ALBERT LEA — At the Albert Lea stop, National Commander James W. “Bill” Oxford spoke on the topic of veteran suicides.

He said 22 veterans a day, on average, die by suicide.

“What do we do about the other 16?” he asked.

The commander called for removing the stigma surrounding talking about suicide and letting men and women know that asking for help is OK.

He said preventing suicide will take everyone: family, friends, teachers, bartenders, co-workers, anyone in the person’s circle of friends and daily routines.

“We are our brother’s keeper,” Oxford said. “If you see something, say something.”

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is 1-800-273-8255, veterans press 1.
ATTEND WWII ROUND TABLE
Hear presentations on topics in World War II history.
Upcoming: Operation Varsity 75th Anniversary (Mar 10) and The Chief of Staff for Eisenhower (Mar 24).
Minnesota History Center, St. Paul.

USE YOUR DISCOUNT
Veterans always receive discounted admission at MNHS historic sites and museums. Visit soon! mnhs.org/visit

CELEBRATE THE VOTE
Find out about Minnesota women who helped secure women’s right to vote in 1919.
“Votes for Minnesota Women” Tour, Mar 14, Minnesota State Capitol, St. Paul.

ADVOCATE FOR HISTORY
Let your legislator know why you support history during History Matters Day at the Capitol, Mar 5, Minnesota State Capitol, St. Paul. Register at mnhs.org/historymatters.

PLAN YOUR VISIT OR PURCHASE ONLINE • MNHS.ORG • 1-844-MNSTORY
Greetings, Minnesota American Legion Family,

This article will contain a few thank-you's and comments about membership.

First and foremost, a big thanks to our national commander, James W. "Bill" Oxford, and his aide, Larry Clime, for their support of our Department of Minnesota.

The only Legion position he ran for was district commander. All other positions he held were in The American Legion, including national commander, he was asked if he would consider running for those positions.

Traveling with our national commander, it became obvious to me of his tremendous leadership ability. Commander Oxford's basic message was the following: As he travels to foreign countries, the respect he and his aide receive are equivalent to a head of state or an important dignitary. This speaks to us for our American Legion and the leaders of these foreign countries is second-to-none!

The American dream is alive and well, he came from a poor, humble background growing up dirt poor in North Carolina to become The American Legion's national commander.

He emphasized how important our Americanism and Children and Youth programs are to the future of our country.

"We are influencing the youth of our country and creating our future leaders through many programs such as Oratorical, Legion Baseball, Boys State, Boys National Girls State, Girls National and Junior Shooting Sports, just to name a few."

Also, he mentioned that it takes months to create and run our many programs, and we all need to be involved in recruiting and signing up new members.

Thank you to the following posts for hosting our national commander: Adams Post 146, Waseca Post 223, Albert Lea Post 56, Wells Post 210, Madelia Post 19, Redwood Falls Post 38, Gaylord Post 243, Mankato Post 11 and New Prague Post 45.

The hospitality shown by our American Legion Family was wonderful and inspiring. You made me proud to be your department commander.

Now, a few comments about membership. We are doing well as a Department; currently Minnesota is in sixth place and is at 89.8 percent. Our percent target date is March 11, and all membership needs to be into the Department by noon on March 11.

Are we the few, the last, the true American Legionnaires? I have always believed that doing well is the least you can do. From my heart, I want to make sure that our current membership is at the highest level.

Thank you for all your efforts and support. Let's all work together and get this done!

My final thanks-you are to the following: Department Adjutant Mike Maxa, Department Communication Director Sy Fix. You are all true professionals and did an amazing job representing the Department of Minnesota.

Thank you for all your support and help on getting our Legion and VFW drafted a letter and revised state-by-state comparisons to show how Minnesota has fallen behind.

Letter and revised state-by-state comparisons for the Department of Minnesota.

Membership Director Sy Fix.

our American Legion Family! I am proud to be your department commander.

Mark Dvorak is the commander of The American Legion Department of Minnesota.

PART 2: WILL MINNEAPOLIS DO RIGHT BY CHILD?

In the January edition of The Minnesota Legionnaire, the story was told about Minnesota Public Housing Authority's decision to push the 2-year-old child of a two-war veteran and his fiancé homeless. The headline was "Minnesota housing authority opts to make fiancé and child of a veteran homeless."

The story got national attention on our Legion’s Facebook page. Our statement in the Star Tribune was "The cold math of Minnesota’s housing shortage puts another veteran’s toddler out on the streets."

It caused individuals to donate to the American Legion Post 550 donated $2,000 from its charitable gaming account. The Hopkins VFW Post 425 stepped up with over $1,000 for apartment application fees, renter’s insurance and moving and other costs. Palm Lake VFW Post 3915 and Osseo American Legion Post 172 each stepped up with $1,000 to keep the veteran family’s rent from an unaffordable $950 to a barely affordable $750 per month rent.

MPHA provided $950 for first month’s rent. The Minnesota Elks Legions Program provided necessary move-in supplies, from soap and cleaning supplies to needed household goods. Lutheran Social Services is providing financial counseling and budgeting assistance to make sure her limited income stretches as far as it can.

On Feb. 21, I reached out to the Mayor, the VFW, and Tim Engstrom, representing The American Legion, met with MPHA Interim Executive Director Tracey Scott and Kyle Hanson, the managing director of the Housing Office Voucher program, with two simple asks:

1. MPHA reconsider its decision to deny a Housing Office Voucher to the 2-year-old child of a two-war veteran and his mother, the veteran’s fiancé

2. MPHA discuss changes to MPHA policy to ensure that this would never happen again.

MPHA was adamante: Despite the evidence of over one year’s correspondence of MPHA discussing this veteran and his fiancé and the VFW, including correspondence involving HUD and Sen. Tina Smith’s Office, MPHA has now taken the position that regulations prevent them from discussing a veteran and his family that the agency had been discussing for over a year. If I guess was I trying to defend the indefensible, I’d pivot to: "Oh, no we can’t talk about that!"

Instead of discussing the case, Engstrom spoke in terms of the policy issue — putting children of veterans at risk, giving their HUD-VASH voucher by any means (such as death, abandonment, incarceration, etc.) to the street and he was surprised the nine-member MPHA Board of Commissioners or the staff had not discussed how to handle this situation.

After all, a parent of this child was willing to die for this country, for this state and for this city. Can’t we return the favor?

Scott and Hanson promised him the organization would have that discussion, look into MPHA’s policies and get back to Engstrom.

We will continue fighting for this combat veteran’s fiancé and his child and continue fighting to ensure MPHA never kicks the kid of a veteran to the curb again. If you’d like to help out, please call me at 612-424-0482 and leave a message or email TwoPutTommy@gmail.com.

Tommy Johnson is a member of Bloomington American Legion Post 550, Hopkins VFW Post 425 and the legislative officer for the VFW Department of Minnesota.

The American Legion Department of Minnesota has been involved in raising the profile of the need of the expel Veteran Centers in Minnesota, and this month it resulted in action.

"Working with members of the Commander’s Task Force, the Legion and VFW drafted a letter and revised state-by-state comparisons to show how Minnesota historically lags behind. We also sent emails, made phone calls, spoke with key officials and gave presentations.

This state has three Veteran Centers, two in the metro and one in Duluth. There is one for every 11,284 veterans. (North Dakota has zero, one for one, every 11,284 veterans.) Most states fall into the range of one per 40,000 to 75,000. It is clear the Veteran Centers of readjustment counseling is underserving rural Minnesota. Other states have expanded. We have not. It’s our turn.

On Feb. 20, U.S. Rep. Collin Peterson, who sits on the House Veterans Affairs Committee, sent a letter to Secretary of the VA Robert Wilkie. This letter calls out for increasing the level of Veteran Center services in Greater Minnesota.

Department Commander Mark Dvorak, commander of the new center in Duluth, wrote: "The American Legion serves veterans and active service members by ensuring they receive the quality care promised to them. That includes mental health counseling for them and their loved ones as they make difficult adjustments in life, such as going from warriors to civilians and from combat to peace. Veteran Centers are crucial to veterans suffering from suicide, homelessness, loss of a sense of purpose and similar transitions. As we travel all over the state, it becomes clear we need to expand Veteran Centers."

A poem helped me during a hard time

There are times in each of our lives where we feel as though we're in troubles and wonder "why" God has let these things happen to us.

In many cases we have a strong network of family and friends to help us along the way and we still struggle.

When my daughter, Teresa, passed away seven years ago, I asked the big "Why?" of God, and I just couldn’t understand. I felt betrayed and angry because we were a God-loving family and were basically good people in strong in our faith.

My daughter had gone through several trials with our health and other things and had worked or way through them, But, this time …

I really struggled.

A friend had sent me this poem and its words have helped me understand that God was with me all along. The poem:

One night I dreamed a dream.

As I was walking along the beach with my Lord,

Across the dark sky flashed scenes from my life.

For each scene, I noticed two sets of footprints in the sand,

One belonging to me and one to my Lord.

After the last scene of my life flashed before me,

I looked back at the footprints in the sand,

I noticed that at many times along the path of my life,

especially at the very lowest and saddest times,

there was only one set of footprints.

This really troubled me, so I asked the Lord about it.

"Lord, you said once I decided to follow you,

You’d walk with me all the way.

But I noticed that during the saddest and most troublesome times of my life,

there was only one set of footprints.

I don’t understand why, when I needed you the most, you didn’t walk with me.

He whispered, “My precious child, I love you and will never leave you.

Never, ever, during your trials and testings.

When you saw only one set of footprints,

It was then that I carried you.”

Thank you for God your presence in my life. Amen.

Betty Jass is the chaplain for The American Legion Department of Minnesota.

I'm proud of the Legion Family in Minn.

Greetings American Legion Family,

It's getting closer to spring season! Spring is just around the corner. You are going to be seeing a lot of adventures and events (you if you're on Facebook) coming up in the future.

The American Legion family is out there doing some great things and have a lot of rides set up for the spring, summer and fall. Please visit our website and support them, and please ask them to support you. We are a family, and we are great at working together.

One of the things I would like to see this year is better communication between the chapters. We all have a lot of different voices. We all need to be able to use each other’s support. We should also be communicating with the rest of the Legion Family and get along with the same goal, and that is to support veterans and their families.

There are so many great people in all of the organization that it would be a shame if you didn’t meet all them.

Love all of you.

Paul Hassing is the director for the American Legion Riders for the Department of Minnesota.
Minnesota Legion College accepting applicants

Legion College is now available through the internet. It is planned for Friday, May 29, through Sunday, May 31, at Camp Gordon. One of the organizers, Denise Milton of Bagley Post 16, said: “This is an opportunity for prospective leaders in our organization to become students of things Legion.” This is especially for those who want to make a difference in the American Legion and have the ‘know-how’ to make a great opportunity to network with other like-minded veterans.”

Legion College enhances knowledge and appreciation of The American Legion and teaches the core values and contributions of the organization, its Auxiliary, Sons of The American Legion and many subordinate programs. It prepares Legionnaires for leadership positions in Posts, Districts, Adjutancy, Department and National levels, education, development and motivation. The curriculum challenges student leaders to think critically and creatively about current and future issues. The tuition is $150 per student, which includes housing and class materials. The tuition and all accommodations are paid by mzl.org. Just download and email and postal mail to the addresses shown on the Legion College page of the Department of Minnesota website.

The deadline to sign up is April 15.

Obituary  

Anderson, Clarence M., 88, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Dec. 25, 2019. He was a member of Detroit Lakes Post 15.

Baker, Donald Otto, 98, Army Air Force veteran of World War II, died Jan. 22, 2020. He received a Bronze Star. He was a member of Pine Island Post 184 for more than 50 years.

Berger, John Robert “JR”, 71, Marine veteran of Vietnam and career Army National Guard veteran, died Jan. 19, 2020. He also worked for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. He was a past commander and chaplain for Winona Post 9 and a 48-year Legion member.

Berndt, Donald C., 92, Army Air Corps and Counter Intelligence Corps veteran of World War II, died Dec. 19, 2019. He also served in the Air Force Reserve during the Vietnam War. He was a member of Coon Rapids Post 334.

Burgdorfer, Lester D., “Burgie,” 89, Air Force veteran who flew a “wheely” during the Korean War, died Feb. 7, 2020. He was a member of Plainview Post 179.

Burgh, Eugene Earl, 97, Army veteran of World War II (Europe), died Jan. 17, 2020. He fought in the 44th Infantry Division “Timberwolves” and earned a Bronze Star and Purple Heart. He was a member of Austin Post 91.


Debbaut, Delmar, 86, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Jan. 19, 2020. He was a member of Milroy Post 574.

DeMars, John “Jack” Eldon, 75, Marine veteran of the Vietnam War, died Feb. 16, 2020. He was in the 1st Battalion of the 1st Marines of the 1st Marine Division. He was a member of Coon Rapids Post 272.

Dingle, James H., 97, Army veteran of World War II, died Feb. 6, 2020. He served in the 11th Armored Division and was awarded the Purple Heart and a Bronze Star. He was a 57-year member of Coon Rapids Post 334.

Dohrn, Richard, 75, Army veteran of Vietnam era, died Jan. 24, 2020. He was a member of Lake City Post 110.

Dressen, Eugene “Gene,” 91, Marine veteran of 1946-47 who was called back to serve in the Air Force 1950-54. He was a member of Redwood Falls Post 36.

Drewelow, John W., 87, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Jan. 19, 2020. He was a member of Graceville Post 297.

Ekstrom, Leroy, 97, Army veteran of World War II, died Dec. 26, 2019. He was a member of Willmar Post 157.

Ensrud, Gayle B., 81, Navy veteran of Vietnam, died Dec. 19, 2019. He was a past commander of Blue Earth Post 89.

Fierke, D. William “Spike,” 97, Army Air Force veteran of World War II, died Jan. 10, 2020. He served as an armorer in the 392nd Fighter Squadron and a crew chief in Germany. He was selected to the Minnesota delegation for the 2004 dedication of the National World War II Memorial. He was the Department of Minnesota historian in 1993, District commander in 1994 and was state vice commander five years and volunteer for 13 years as club and gambling manager for West Duluth Post 17.

Flinn, Margaret, 96, Marine veteran, died Jan. 9, 2020. She was a member of Waseca Post 228.


Grau, Michael Henry, 74, Navy veteran of the Vietnam War, died Feb. 20, 2020. He spent time in Vietnam with both the Navy and Marines. He was a member of New Ulm Post 132.

Gronewold, Peter, 88, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Jan. 22, 2020. He served in the 3rd Division, 65th Infantry, Hennepin Motor Company. He was a member of Round Lake Post 461.

Musser, Thomas, 88, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Jan. 28, 2020. He was stationed in Germany and assigned to play on Army sports teams. He was a member of Marshall Post 113.

Pantzke, Steve, 69, Marine veteran of the Vietnam War, died Nov. 25, 2019. He was a member of Lansing Post 163.

Paskie, Alexander “Mr. Mayor,” 88, veteran of the Korean War, died Jan. 13, 2020. He was a paratrooper and a glider infantryman. He was a 43-year member of Hillman Post 602.

Priebe, John Patrick, 49, Army veteran of Panama and the National Guard, died Jan. 3, 2020. He was a member of Waseca Post 228.

Przybilla, Roger Edmund, 73, Army veteran of Vietnam, died Jan. 29, 2020. He served with the 11th Armor Cavalry Regiment Air Troop. He was a member of Rice Post 473.


Robert, Edward, 89, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Dec. 25, 2019. He was a 40-year member of Cambridge Post 290.

Ryan, James J., 73, Army veteran of Vietnam, died Dec. 10, 2019. He was a member of Anoka Post 102.

Schulte, William, 68, Army National Guard veteran of Vietnam, died Jan. 21, 2020. He was a member of Albert Lea Post 28.

Skaar, Gerald C., 85, Navy veteran of Korea, died Jan. 8, 2020. He was a member of Albert Lea Post 56.

Sothern, “Sammie,” 92, Army Air Corps veteran of World War II, died Feb. 7, 2020. He was a master sergeant electrician crew chief for the 8th Army Air Corps, servicing B-24s in England and received a Bronze Star. He was a 64-year member of Tomah Post 155.

Stensland, Ronald W., 90, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Jan. 27, 2020. He was a member of Blue Earth Post 89 for more than 50 years. He served many years on the honor guard.

Tessmer, Daryl A., 83, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Feb. 18, 2020. He was a member of Caledonia Post 191.

Thompson, Harold W., 95, Army veteran of World War II, died Feb. 3, 2020. He served 212 continuous days in combat in the Philippines, as well as serving in New Guinea and Korea. He was a member of New Richmond Post 75.

Thompson, Harold W., 95, Army veteran of World War II, died Feb. 3, 2020. He was a member of New Richmond Post 75.

Walk, Daryl, 91, veteran of the Korean War, died Jan. 27, 2020. He was a member of Albert Lea Post 56.

Watjen, Ken, 95, Army veteran of World War II, died Jan. 25, 2020. He served with the 485th Bomb Group in Italy. He was a member of North Branch Post 85.

Wilde, Robert, 69, Army and Army Reserve veteran, died Jan. 2, 2020. He was a member of the 538th Engineers in the Vietnam War. He was a member of Thief River Falls Post 117.

Wixcey, Charles “Chuck,” 92, Army veteran of World War II (Germany) and the Korean War (Japan), died Jan. 5, 2020. He was a past commander and a member of Hutchinson Post 103.


Corrections

Ruchti, Ronald C., 76, Navy veteran of the Vietnam War, died Dec. 17, 2019. He was a member of Willmar Post 167.

Also, in the February issue, it said Albert B. Russ had died, instead of Gayle B. Enrud of Blue Earth Post 89. Russ remains very much alive.
With the recent implementation of the Mission Act (June 2019), which included a complete overhaul of VA’s Care in the Community Program, veterans like myself had expectations that we would have expedited access to care in the community if VA didn’t deliver on a timely manner. This VA reform is an ongoing attempt to find a solution hoping to expedite veteran’s access to treatment and not having another epidemic like the Phoenix VA wait-time scandal in 2014, where veterans died while waiting for care.

The VA’s Inspector General recently released a report that found there was an average of a two-month wait time in 2018 for veterans to access appointments in the community and warns that the problem may get worse with the Mission Act reform.

The report found wait times in 2018 were driven from the lack of sufficient administrative staffing at VA medical centers.

To fully understand the VA is today, let’s take a look prior to the Mission Act, when Congress passed the Veterans Access, Choice and Accountability Act of 2014 in response to the 2014 Phoenix scandal.

Under Choice, VA’s third-party administrator (TPA) was set to follow the VA and the contract providers. Establishing a network of contract providers, communicating with the VA and the providers to follow the VA and the contract providers.

Recently, the Department of Veterans Affairs began sending veterans outside the VA for care, due to the government’s paucity of care in the community. VA’s Care in the Community Program was Health Net Federal Services (HNFS).

HNFS was responsible for everything except authorizing the patient for care in the community, thus included establishing a network of contract providers, communicating and scheduling appointments with patients, answering billing questions and paying the contract providers.

VA quickly found out that they were no longer in-charge of their customer service, which at the time became one of VA’s highest priorities, to back the hearts and minds of veterans after the scandal. Over about four years of the programs existence there were several reforms to the program which only complicated things for all parties, including veteran, VA, TPA and the contract providers.

Veterans had nowhere to turn for answers; VA referred to the TPA and vice versa. Providers began opting out of the program after losing reimbursement for delivered care and VA couldn’t do anything about it other than take the blame.

So, this brings us back to the Mission Act and the overhaul of the Care in the Community Program. This time VA changed its TPA to a TriWest which was already well established for 17 years administering DOD’s TRICARE program.

VA wanted to take ownership of their customer service back, working directly with their patients not relying on the third-party administrator.

As of June 6, 2019, VA did exactly that taking over the responsibility of coordinating and scheduling care for all veterans that have a consult to community care. What VA didn’t anticipate was the increase in staffing that would be required for each VA Medical Center to facilitate the demand.

In 2018, 39 percent of patients were sent for treatment outside of VA hospital because the government’s facilities could not provide care in a timely manner, investigators reported. With the Mission Act’s implementation, the workload to transfer VA patients to private care could double from 684,000 to 3.7 million, now that the eligibility for veterans to seek private care has expanded under the Mission Act.

Recently, the American Legion Department Rehabilitation Committee conducted its System Worth Saving Site Visit with Minneapolis VA Health Care System where they were able to direct their questions to facility leadership. Questions surrounding veterans waiting for their community care appointments were addressed and leadership understood and were aware of the problem. With this move, the VA introduced the Community Care Program which consists of schedulers and clinical staff it’s not nearly enough to keep up with the high referral rate to community care.

With the Mission Act, the VA is today, let’s look back at VA as today, let’s look back to follow.

DULUTH — The Minnesota Navy League has commissioned a watercolor of the USS Minneapolis-St. Paul (LCS-21) transiting under the iconic Aerial Lift Bridge in Duluth.

The ship will be commissioned by the Navy in the Port of Duluth in the spring of 2021. This will be the first time a naval ship has been commissioned within the state of Minnesota.

The USS Minneapolis-St. Paul is one of the Navy’s newest warships. It is being built in Marietta, Georgia, and is a Littoral Combat Ship (LCS) that will operate in waters close to shore.

The vessel will have a vertical-launching system for helicopters and unmanned aerial vehicles, a ramp for small boats that can be used by assault forces.

The USS Minneapolis-St. Paul is the second ship in naval service named after Minnesota’s Twin Cities. The first vessel named Minneapolis-Saint Paul was a submarine decommissioned from Naval service in 2008.

The artist, John T. Salminen, is a Minnesotan born and raised in St. Paul. He earned his bachelor’s degree and master’s degree from the University of Minnesota and lives in Duluth.

Salminen is a signature member of numerous prestigious art societies in the United States including The American Watercolor Society, The National Watercolor Society, The Transparent Watercolor Society of America and Allied Artists.

He serves as a board member of the American Watercolor Society and is the president of the International Masters of Watercolour Association centered in Minneapolis.

His website is johnsalminen.com.

The Minnesota Navy League Navy League will sell prints as soon as it establishes the production process on its website at navyleaguemn.org.

You, or your family, or your company can support the commissioning of the USS Minneapolis-St. Paul in any dollar amount. Send a contribution to USS Minneapolis-Saint Paul Commissioning Committee, treasurer, Captain Mark Stange, USNR (Ret.) at Captain Mark Stange USNR (Ret), 655 Evergreen Circle, Shoreview, MN 55126.

Let’s make the state of Minnesota proud by supporting this iconic event.

The Navy League of the United States, Minnesota Council is a 501(c)(3) organization whose role is to bring attention to the importance of the naval sea services. The USS Minneapolis-Saint Paul Commissioning Committee is a project of the Navy League of the United States.

Pat Dolan is the vice president of communications for the Minnesota Navy League.

**Legion membership chart as of February 2020**

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**Membership Rally is set for March 21**

**LA CROSSE** — The Appreciation Membership Rally happens March 21 in La Crosse.

Social hour begins at 4:30 p.m., dinner at 5:30 p.m., program to follow.

**WATERCOLOR DEPICTS USS Mpls-St. Paul UNDER LIFT BRIDGE**

By Pat Dolan

The USS Minneapolis-Saint Paul, depicted in this John T. Salminen watercolor, will reach Duluth for commissioning in spring 2021. Prints will be for sale soon.

The 16th Military Ball is April 25 in Spring Grove

SPRING GROVE — The 16th Annual Military Ball is April 25, at the Fest Building, 110 N. Division Ave., Spring Grove.

Hosted by the military family, the evening includes a catered meal, presentation of colors, toasts to the branches of service, POW/MIA ceremony, roll call, “Taps,” speaker, photographs, patriotic displays and a live nine-piece band.

The event is open to the public, and especially all military service members and veterans, as well as spouses and families.

Attire for the ball is Sunday best, semi-formal, or formal, with many wearing their military uniform or the uniform of a veteran’s organization. Organizers request no casual street clothes.

Cost for the evening is $30 per person, and attendance is by RSVP only.

Social hour and photos begin at 4:30 p.m., with dinner at 5:45 p.m. and dancing at 8 p.m.

Invitations were sent in the mail to those who attended the ball in past years and others who had already signed up. For those who would like to attend, but are not yet on the invitation list, and for more information about the military ball, please contact Gary Rusnak at 21465 Southview Road, Spring Grove, MN 55974, call 507-496-3461, or email grrusnak@springgrovecoop.com.
My grandfather, wounded at the Battle of Iwo Jima, still inspires

I’ve decided to call my column “All-American” in honor of the 82nd Airborne Division and The American Legion’s pillar of Americanism. The 82nd is nicknamed “All-American” because the initial formation in August 1917 had soldiers from all 48 states, which was uncommon back then. It is why the shoulder patch has that famous “A” on it, and I have to admit, I felt like an All-American to be part of that division in my Army days. I served in the Persian Gulf War as a soldier with the 82nd Airborne. In fact, I was among the first wave of the division’s paratroopers to the Middle East. You had months before deploying? I had hours.

Somehow the Air Force managed to land the plane at King Fahd International Airport, and we didn’t need to jump out this time.

OK, OK, I know, I just angered all the Air Force people. Just kidding.

The Army and Air Force can be friendly rivals at times, but in the Army Airborne, we liked our Air Force friends. Without their “hard” work, we couldn’t enjoy jumps or collect jump pay.

But the main reason I am proud of being a paratrooper is that my late grandfather, Rudolph Engstrom of Lake City, Iowa, was a paratrooper, too. Why did he want to be a paratrooper? Extra pay, of course. He served in the 2nd Parachute Battalion with the Marines, and they were called pararaimes. He went to boot camp and jump school at San Diego.

His unit went ashore — rather than jump — on the island of Choiseul in October 1943, with the intention of distracting the Japanese from a larger American attack on the island of Bougainville. They conducted raids all over Choiseul, documented in the book “Mission Raise Hell: The U.S. Marines on Choiseul October-November 1943” by James F. Christ. My grandfather is named in that book.

The Marines disbanded their parachute units, and Engstrom ended up in the new 5th Marine Division, which was among the ground units at the Battle of Iwo Jima. Long ago, as kids, we would see that Joe Rosenthal photo of the flag-raising on Mount Suribachi but not know much about it other than Grandpa had been in Iwo Jima. We would ask Grandpa, “Hey, how come you aren’t in that photo?” He would reply, “I was one they selected to take the picture.”

Pretty clever guy, huh?

The fact is, Cpl. Rudolph E. Engstrom was wounded on his third day on the island, Feb. 20, 1945. The Marine had taken shrapnel to his neck and was bleeding everywhere because the wound was close to his jugular vein.

A Navy corpsman treated him in a shell hole. He was holding a dressing to the wound to halt the bleeding when a Marine photographer, Sgt. Dave Christian, turned up. Grandpa held up the shrapnel that wounded him, and, click, his image remains among the iconic images of the battle.

Note that Grandpa, loyal to his training, cradles his M-1 rifle while waiting for a stretcher team to evacuate him. Hollywood actor and director Clint Eastwood directed an excellent movie called “Flags of Our Fathers” about the Battle of Iwo Jima, released in 2006. During the closing credits, there are images from the battle, and the Dave Christian photo of my grandfather is among them.

Imagine being at the movie theater that summer and, unexpectedly, there is your grandpa up on the screen. That was quite an honor for our small-town family. Let’s not forget, he received the Purple Heart for his wound.

Grandpa Rudy recovered from the neck wound and was with Marines on a ship preparing for the invasion of Japan when the Japanese surrendered in August, then formed in September. He went to Japan part of the occupation before returning home to Swea City, Iowa.

There, he convinced Naomi Speicher, who had the nickname of Tootie, to marry him instead of some other guy partly with the logic that the other guy wasn’t a Marine. She graduated from the Minneapolis College of Business and he from Iowa State University, and they settled along the Raccoon River outside of Lake City, Iowa, where he became a vocational agriculture teacher and FFA adviser, and she was a sales coordinator for Bowie Manufacturing.

Grandpa Rudy and Grandmother Tootie remained married for 72 years. Both died in 2019, she in April and he in September. He was a member of The American Legion and the Auxiliary. He was honored throughout Iowa for his role as an FFA adviser and launching a nonprofit to sell fruit as a fundraiser. She was on the Chamber of Commerce board and coined the phrase that still greets motorists when they enter town: “Lake City, Everything But a Lake.”

They had five children, and I was the first grandchild.

All-American

Tim Engstrom

Bowing alley reopens

DAYTON — Sundance Lanes, where the 73rd annual American Legion Bowling Tournament is slated to take place March 21 to April 18, closed.

And then, after renovations, it reopened under new ownership. The website sundancecgbowling.com could not be reached because the place’s new website is sundancedentiamentum.com.

Department Bowling

Continued from Page 5

orchestration of Allied forces to achieve victory in Europe. Smith, a man who enlisted as a private in the Indiana National Guard in 1911, was chief of staff for Gen. Dwight Eisenhower at Allied Headquarters.

The Twin Cities Civil War Roundtable is slated for March 17 at the Bloomington Event Center, Knights of Columbus, 1114 American Blvd. W., in Bloomington. Social hour at 5:45 p.m., followed by a dinner, with the speaker at 6:30 p.m. To become a member, contact Carol VanOmmun at info@tcwclt.com. This month, John Hammond talks about the Dakota War Trials of 1862.

The St. Croix River Valley Civil War Roundtable takes place March 23. Robert Fiedler plans to talk about “The Law and the Civil War.” The meeting begins at 5:30 p.m. with a social hour, a buffet meal at 6 p.m., followed by the presentation at 7 p.m., at the Lowell Inn, 102 N. Second St., Stillwater.

Check out the crafts, antiques

NORTH ST. PAUL — A craft and antique market is slated for March 7 from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. at North St. Paul Post 39, 2678 E. Seventh Ave., North St. Paul.

As for food, there will be a bake sale, and the kitchen will be open.

Proceeds go toward Auxiliary programs. Want more information? Contact Betty at 651-777-5552.

Vietnam War to be focus on March 29

BYRON — Byron Post 119 is hosting a program on March 29 called Vietnam War Commemoration.

A presidential proclamation has designated March 29 as a date on which America will commemorate the Vietnam War. The Byron Post is inviting District 1 Legionnaires and their families to attend its commemoration.

Legal clinics planned

Free legal clinics for low-income veterans will be held in March, sponsored by MACV.

For more information call 651-200-9750.

It is Tuesday, March 10, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., at the Minneapolis VA Medical Center’s Flag Atrium Balcony Room. Another is Thursday, March 5, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Anoka County Government Center.
The merciful ones received a bullet

The Battle of Manila was gruesome, especially for civilians

By Tim Engstrom

James Scott stands at the podium of 3M Auditorium at the Minnesota History Center on Feb. 11 in front of a photograph of Americans who endured captivity at the University of Santo Tomas in Manila.

James Scott is the author of "Rampage: MacArthur, Yamashita, and the Battle of Manila."

American artillery barrage that morning blackened the sky, turning day to night. An hour later, troops moved into the walled city.

"The ensuing silence seemed even louder than the bombardment," recalled one journalist.

Scott said the troops found the survivors were pretty much all women and children. Investigators determined the Japanese had killed 4,000 men inside Intramuros.


Iwabuchi and his troops were in the Agriculture and Finance buildings. The final stand came down to the Agriculture building.

America's guns pulverized the columns of the structure, exposing the rebar, Scott said, and Iwabuchi withered the onslaught. After telling his men to escape or taking their own lives, he retreated to his quarters and slit open his belly. Most of his men chose to die. Some surrendered. The battle ended March 3.
Bernard "Bud" Benoit sits beside a flag at Wold-Chamberlain Post 99 in Minneapolis.

An eyewitness to the Pacific Theater

Bud" Benoit, who turns 100 years old this month, was at battles of Guadalcanal, Tarawa, Saipan, Tinian, Okinawa

By Tim Engstrom

MINNEAPOLIS — Witness to the Pacific Theater of World War II, Bernard "Bud" Benoit — became a centenarian on March 3. He and his family enjoyed a birthday party at Wold-Chamberlain Post 99 in South Minneapolis.

The Purple Heart award is spiny and talkative as just about anyone else, and listening to him is like reclining on a beach chair while watching American forces come ashore on island after island. He has firsthand experiences.

In order, he was on Guadalcanal, Tarawa, Saipan, Tinian and Okinawa.

The worst? Tarawa.

"The Japanese had never lost a battle in 2,000 years," Benoit said. "We had to walk into their bullets, and our boats got caught on a coral reef. We should never have won that island."

He said the Japanese pushed the Marines back to 50 feet from the shore. It looked like all was lost until, suddenly, the Japanese pulled back farther island.

Benoit grew up in a tough Minneapolis neighborhood where Bernard wasn't exactly manly sounding, so Bud worked well. It was the old Snooze Boulevard area — Cedar and Washington — before his family moved down to Franklin Avenue.

He graduated high school. Instead, he got a job at 16 with Western Union.

"I was tired of being broke all my life," he said.

At 17, he went to work for the Civilian Conservation Corps, which was under supervision of the U.S. Army, and he put his muscles to work at Gooseberry Falls State Park. He got hurt, and as he recovered he couldn't leave."

He began helping out at the medical office. He was asked to stay in that role.

Benoit's sister married a guy who had been rejected from the U.S. Navy, in Wisconsin, and Benoit took a route collecting the coins and checking their condition. The guy wanted him to take over the company, but then the war came.

He went home and got a job at MeGlynn Bakery, first cleaning, then as a clerk, then a helper. With a special truck and the ability to balance many trays, he delivered baked goods to several stores in Uptown and the north side.

On March 3, 1942 — at age 22 — he joined the Navy. Why? Well, the Army, he said, had a lot of people who had troubles of one sort or another, and the Marines sometimes entered combat under the command of the Army, so the Navy sounded like a better plan.

He entered boot camp in San Diego, and then he was stationed there, going to sea on ships as the Navy worked to perfect radar.

In 1943, Benoit was drafted into the Marine Corps as a corporal, he said.

He had the only set of Marine Blues as a result of doing MP duty, so he spent time at ceremonies. Everyone else only had Greens. His uniforms are all now at a museum in New Ulm.

At Guadalcanal, he didn't see much of the six-month battle, just the last two months.

"It was pretty well secure, but we still lost some men during the landing," he said.

At the Battle of Tarawa, his division, the 2nd Marines, were the only ones going ashore, and it was the first time American forces were facing resistance during amphibious landing. The Marines had to dig in along the beach.

"Tarawa was so flat that you couldn't take a crap there," Benoit said.

Finally, the 6th Marines joined the fight.

"They were fresh. They went right through and the island was ours," he said.

On Tarawa, Benoit got in some hot water. He tripped on a dying man and told the battalion's chief sergeant he ought to be saving his life.

The surgeon ordered him to give a bottle of blood to the man in hopes that it would stabilize him. Benoit doesn't know whether that man lived or died, but the surgeon wanted to court-martial Benoit for questioning his decisions.

There had been some serious off-the-record words exchanged, including the corporal saying "Never get in front of my rifle."

Today, Benoit admits the doctor's duty was to mend soldiers so they could return to the fight, not address the worst. And there was always a shortage of doctors.

He later learned a colonel who oversaw the surgeon protected Benoit from being court-martialed.

Still, Benoit was the corporal for Dog Company and he avoided sending his injured men to HQ company, where the chief surgeon worked.

Also on Tarawa, he shot a Japanese soldier and recovered a special Japanese flag. It had a rising sun and surrains built with a man and a woman with matching babies. He sold it for booze and beers, the drinking of which meant a lot to him.

Finally, the 6th Marines joined the fight.

"They were fresh. They went right through and the island was ours," he said.

At the Battle of Saipan was the first on the Marianas performed a feint, like they had many on islands, where one force receives the attention of the Japanese, while other forces land with little or no resistance on another shore. The value of the island was its long airstrip, which was the launching point for the atomic bomb attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Benoit was awarded the Purple Heart as a result of the battle. Artillery was called in and a short round fell near him and carried him through the air.

"I was breathing out of all orifices and placed on a dead pile," Benoit said.

The Marines found out he wasn't dead and took him to a field hospital. After recovering, he was forced to remain in the hospital against his will, so he just walked out and headed for his unit. He ended up listed as missing, and he wasn't officially listed as found until a month later before the battle ended.

Benoit's mother was unsure whether his son was alive or dead.

At the Battle of Tinian, the Marines performed a feint, like they had on many islands, where one force receives the attention of the Japanese, while other forces land with little or no resistance on another shore. The value of the island was its long airstrip, which was the launching point for the atomic bomb attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

He left the Navy on Dec. 14, 1945, and returned to his bakery job in Minneapolis. He wasn't sleeping well and felt like he needed a new job, so he applied for a license to sell liquor.

He opened the store, Family Circle, at 20th Avenue and Minnehaha Avenue.

He did that for six years, then worked in construction before he and a friend joined to purchase an oil station. He got married on Nov. 27, 1951, to Marvin Jobes. They had two sons and two daughters — Steve, Denise, Shellei and Jamie.

A friend wanted a liquor joint but couldn't get a license, so they joined to get one and opened Billy Bud's on Washington and Plymouth, right across from the labor temple. For the six years it was open, it was the scene of fights outside the door and gang-related activities.

He then became a painting contractor before entering a career in real estate.

Finally, he managed the NCO Club at Fort Snelling before retiring. These days, Benoit lives at 49th Street and 31st Avenue.

He is the last surviving member of his Marine chapter.

Doors to the St. Paul Armory open at 10 a.m., not sooner

Continued from Page 1

up being approved and signed into law.

That way, they can kill it without voting on it.

And that's what Veterans Day on the Hill aims to do: Make sure lawmakers don't drop the ball.

The DA V Foundation is offering a 50 percent reimbursement for American Legion, VFW or other organizations for the cost of providing busing to the Capitol Complex in St. Paul for Veterans Day on the Hill.

Organizations that seek the reimbursement cannot "pass the hat" or otherwise raise funds. The ride must be offered free of charge.

Contact the DAV MN at 651-291-1212 to get the reimbursement documents, preferably before March 20.

Veterans Day on the Hill is presented by the Commanders' Task Force, the United Veterans Legislative Council of Minnesota and the Minnesota Association of County Veterans Service Officers.

Doors open at 10 a.m. April 20 at the St. Paul Armory — and no sooner. DAV provides a free catered hunch between 10:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. The veterans will gather outside the Veterans Service Building at 12:45 p.m. and march across the lawn to the Capitol. The Rally in the Rotunda commences at 1:30 p.m. and goes on one hour.

Read more about who will be speaking in the April issue of The Minnesota Legionnaire.

The rally is a chance to let lawmakers hear the voice of veterans. Topics being pushed this year are:

- Making the surviving spouse's property tax exclusion transferable to new property (helping to downsize without penalty).
- Removing the burden of property taxes from Legion, VFW, AmVets Post buildings.
- Reducing the cost of hunting, fishing and trapping licenses for disabled veterans.
- Expanding veterans treatment courts.
- Increasing hourly wage for personnel care attendents.
- Eliminating language about post-9/11 veterans in the veterans preference law to apply to all veterans.
- Increasing the state grant given to veteran service organizations.
- Funding the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs and supporting its legislative initiatives.
- Some of the MDVA initiatives are the same, but the others are:

  - Fund staffing and efforts for preventing suicide among veterans ($1 million 2020-21; $1.2 million 2021-22).
  - Fund $100,000 via bonding for a greenhouse at the Fergus Falls Veterans Home. The residence living there already has raised nearly $100,000 for the project.
  - Fund $4 million via bonding for improving the safety and security of the veterans homes.
  - Fund $10.7 million via bonding for asset preservation. The MDVA has 64 buildings valued at $31 million to maintain.
  - Fund $100,000 via bonding for a greenhouse at the Fergus Falls Veterans Home. The residence living there already has raised nearly $100,000 for the project.

  - Clarify language in the Minnesota G.I. Bill to avoid misuse.
  - Authorize the MDVA to operate adult day care.
  - Authorize the MDVA to operate assisted living and nursing homes.
  - Fund $15 million via bonding for improving safety and security of the veterans homes.

  - Clarify language in the Minnesota G.I. Bill to avoid misuse.
Doug Bible was detachment adjutant for SAL for over 35 years

By Al Zdon

S

T. CLOUD — Doug Bible has been involved in the Sons of the American Legion since he was a kid. He served as national commander in 1986-87. He retired as adjutant of the Minnesota Detachment last year after over 35 years of service. And you might not guess from his quiet manner or his tendency to avoid the spotlight, but he may be the most powerful behind-the-scenes figure in the 365,000-member national organization.

Bible was born and raised in Waite Park where his dad, Daniel, was a commander of the Waite Park Silver Star Post. The post was named after three World War I veterans who earned a Silver Star. One of them was Bible's grandfather, Paul, who also earned a Purple Heart and a Distinguished Service Cross. As one point in the war, Paul left his trench under heavy fire and rescued wounded comrades from another trench.

Doug Bible became an SAL member when the Waite Park squadron was chartered in 1966. He was 9 years old at the time. “We were quite active at parades and community events.”

There was no statewide SAL organization at the time, but when it got organized, Bible became active. “I ran for detachment commander in 1970, but I lost. I ran again in 1971, and I won. I was 14 years old. It was fairly common for our officers to be young people at that time.”

The state structure continued to grow, and the districts were formed. There were about a thousand or 1,500 members at the time in Minnesota.

“We grew every year consistently since then. We reached 10,000 members in 2005 when Robert Bristo was commander.”

Bible also became involved in the national organization, and has only missed two national conventions in his years of service. In 1973, he was elected National Vice Commander at age 16. In those days, we didn’t do much traveling. We kept in touch with others through the mail or by phone.”

In 1983, he was elected national chaplain of the SAL at age 26. All this time he had been active at the national level, serving on committees and on the SAL’s National Executive Committee.

And in 1986, he was elected national commander of the Sons of the American Legion. “I was elected at the convention at Cincinnati, and at the end of the convention, I got engaged to Marsha.”

He remembers a great year. “We were still pretty early in our history. We had about 75,000 members. We didn’t have a big budget, but we were growing.”

H

is commander’s project that year was the Juvenile Diabetes Foundation, and when it came time to present the donation, it was one of the highlights of his year. “They had a big event at Universal Studios in Hollywood, and they invited me out. It was live television. I got to present the check to Michael Landon and Gloria Loring. Later, at the party, I got to meet Bea Arthur and Betty White and many others. It was great. And the SAL got a bunch of good national press from the event.”

Also during his year, the SAL gave its first check — for $5,000 — to the Child Welfare Foundation, which in later years became the organization’s primary project. The Child Welfare fund has now risen to $8 million, and over $250,000 in grants are given each year to projects in the nation that help children.

“The CWF has really been our primary focus, along with the National Emergency Fund. We’ve really made a big impact year after year, and it’s been great to see the success of the programs.”

With his year over as national commander, Bible came back to Minnesota and took over the detachment adjutant job again, a position he held prior to his national service.

He also got married to Marsha in 1987. “Her father was also a commander and very involved in the Sons of the American Legion, and Marsha and I met at a luau in Hawaii at the national convention. They lived in Pittsburgh. We would see each other several times a year at national meetings.”

Bible says his service with the SAL has been a major part of his life. “I’ve really enjoyed it. In the Legion Family, you make lifelong friends. There’s such good camaraderie. I’ve enjoyed watching the SAL’s role in the Legion grow through the years.”

The Bible’s son Geoffrey followed in his father’s footsteps for many years, and, like his father, was elected National Chaplain in 2007. Doug says the door is always open for Geoffrey to seek higher office, but right now the younger Bible is busy enough as the deputy director of protocol for Georgetown University.

The elder Bible has remained very active at the national level, and is presently the chairman of the SAL’s Commander’s Advisory Committee. “Our main purpose is to choose upcoming national commanders. It’s a similar role to what Minnesota’s Dan Ludwig has on the Legion side.”

The committee also advises the national commander, and has some input on national appointments. “There are people we want to watch in leadership positions.”

Bible has been the chair of the committee for 10 years.

Doug Bible in grants is given each year to projects in the nation that help children.

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Doug Bible

O

n the home front, Bible retired last year after over 35 years as the Waite Park Post’s adjutant.

“It got to the point where I was so busy with everything, I just needed to step back a little bit.”

At the post, he still does bingo three days a week, as both the caller and the bookkeeper. “I’ve worked at the post for 46 years. I’ve done bingo. I’ve been a bartender. I’ve done a lot of different things.”

“As detachment adjutant, I was most proud over the years to see the cooperation between the Legion and the Sons of the American Legion and the Auxiliary grow.

The SAL Update:

Spring Conference is taking place on March 13

START 'EM YOUNG

From left are Detachment Commander Dave Vulcan; Hugh Hultgren, 6 months and new SAL member; James Hultgren, new SAL member; and SAL member Marlin Brandau. The three were at Osseo-Maple Grove Squadron 172.

SAL Membership as of February 20, 2020

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EAGAN — The members of Eagan Post 594 have been cooking and preparing breakfast at the Fisher House next to the VA Hospital & Medical Center in Minneapolis since August 2019. Fisher House provides free room and board for families of patients receiving care at major military or VA medical centers.

At the onset of this initiative, Hy-Vee Eagan committed to providing Post 594 with gift cards to support the food purchases during the first three months of the program. The post is pleased to announce that Hy-Vee Eagan has committed to continued support of this program indefinitely.

“We really appreciate Hy-Vee partnering with us. Store leadership really cares about veterans and Hy-Vee is helping us make a difference for those families with loved ones in the VA Hospital,” said Post 594 Commander John Flynn. Fisher House management has informed Flynn that Post 594 is the first and only American Legion Post in Minnesota helping with meals at their site.

At this most recent feed, six Post 594 members participated: Cheryl Seanoa, Dan Seanoa, Joe Dolan, Pat Grinde, Stewart Fobes and Tom Mullon. Fisher House leadership and guests continue to express their sincere gratitude.

Larry Otto endorsed for Dept. chaplain

Larry H. Otto has been endorsed by Ellen- dale American Legion Fidelity Post 296 and the 1st District for the Minnesota state office of Chaplain.

Otto served in the U.S. Army from 1969 to 1971, stationed at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, and Fort Dix, New Jersey, and at Kelly Barracks in Stuttgart, Germany. He is a 48-year member of American Legion Post 296, having held every office at his local Post, as well as, a member of the honor guard. Currently, he is Post commander and 1st District chaplain.

Otto has been active in his local community as a member of Clark Grove Cooperative Creamery Board, FFA advisory board, Barbershop Society and a member of Steele County Historical Society.

Otto is also currently serving on the Community Foundation of Ellendale Board of Directors. In this position, he has been instrumental in co-leading renovation of the Ellendale Community Building project in cooperation with the City Council. Furthermore, as a member of Ellendale United Methodist Church, he was a certified lay speaker, church council chairperson, trustee, pastor parish relations committee member, audio-visual chair and a member of the choir. In 2006, Otto was a key player in the construction of the new Ellendale United Methodist Church. For 23 years, he was a member of Praise Hall, a group of eight adults who traveled throughout Minnesota, Iowa and Wisconsin.

Otto and his wife, Emily, have been married 48 years. Emily is a 70-year member of the American Legion Auxiliary. Both are retired, he from farming and construction and she from education. They have two children, Bethany and Josh, and seven grandchildren. Their oldest and only grandson is currently serving in the U.S. Army at Fort Bragg, North Carolina.

“Becoming the Minnesota Department chaplain is an office I would be honored to hold. It has been the one state office of which I most desire to attain,” he said.

Gary Weaver endorsed for vice cmdr.

Gittens-Leidel Post 595 of La Crescent proudly endorses Gary L. Weaver as a candidate for the position of Department 1st and 3rd vice commander. Gary is a U.S. Air Force veteran who served during the Vietnam era. Serving from 1973 to 1977, most of his time was spent at radar stations in North Dakota.

Gary is a 37-year PUFL member of Post 595 and served as commander in 1999/2000. He also served as sergeant-at-arms, 3rd District vice commander, 2nd District vice commander and 1st District vice commander. He is currently on his 23rd year as Sons of The American Legion adviser. Gary can usually be found at any Post function or fundraiser.

At the District level, he has served as commander in 2010-11, Area 3 vice commander three times, Boy Scout chairman, Houston County commander, chaplain and is currently serving as historian. On the Department level, he has served as education chairman and is currently serving as the SAL adviser.

On the national level in October 2019, Gary was appointed to the National Americanism Council and is looking forward to serving in that capacity.

Gary is a member of the Rochester 237 Voiture Locale 40/8 and a 22-year dual member in the SAL, where he served as commander 2009-10 and is currently Squadron 595 adjutant. He is also a past District SAL commander 2000-01, as well as many other offices. He has also served as Detachment vice commander and historian.

In the community, he is a past scoutmaster for Boy Scout Troop 33 in La Crescent. He is a past director of the La Crescent Apple Fest, a current Apple Core member, and a drive for the La Crescent Apple Annie’s. He was a chosen Apple Fest Man of the Year in 2006.

In his personal life, he retired from CenturyLink after 38 years. His son Tim is also active in the SAL, serving on the Squadron level as well as the District and Detachment levels.

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Minnesota Veterans Home
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Phone: 651-539-2486
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**Veterans Appreciation Ride produced big smiles and thumbs up**

TWO HARBORS — Each year for the last 13 years the Minnesota United Snowmobilers Association (MnUSA), Minnesota Education and Advancement Fund (MSEAF) and their clubs have organized a ride for veterans. Because one ride was canceled, this year’s ride on Jan. 11 was the 12th Veterans Appreciation Ride.

This year the ride had a fantastic turnout with 85 veterans participating along with 20 of their family and friends joining in as well. Arranging and transporting sleds for that many can be a challenge — but not in Minnesota. Between the snowmobile manufacturers, dealers and members there were enough sleds for those who needed them. Some vets had their own sleds — and some vets brought extra sleds for their fellow vets to ride. Imagine all of the logistics for the 90-mile ride. According to co-chair Larry Shepherd and Terry Hutchison, volunteers were the key to success. Co-coordinating with the Voyagers Club and the Pequaywan Club, about 50 volunteers pitched in to make the Veterans Appreciation Ride another success.

All branches of service were represented on this ride. Everyone in attendance went home with a big smile on their face and gave many expressions of appreciation to the event organizers. Nice job to MnUSA and MSEAF for saying thanks in their own way.

**Pizza, a state senator and the Greatest Generation**

ROCHESTER — New Year's Eve — but during the day — had the owner of Rochester Pasquale’s Pizza and state Sen. Carla Nelson of Rochester hosting a pizza celebration for the Greatest Generation — World War II veterans.

Ten veterans and their spouses or caregivers attended the event and for two hours wonderful stories were shared by theses veterans.

Navy veteran Tom Perkovich joined and told stories about being aboard the USS Hornet in the South Pacific in early 1945, when they came under a Japanese Kamikaze attack.

In addition to joining The American Legion, he shared his impressions and thoughts on the events of the day.

Nelson is a longtime advocate for veterans matters at the Minnesota State Capitol, and she was joined by Wabasha County Commander Andru Peters, who sponsored Perkovich’s new membership.

Members of Kraft-Ostrom American Legion Post 142 had a very successful third annual packing event. With the help of the community, they are able to send 342 boxes to members of our military that have been deployed overseas. Commander Craig Hedstrom would like to thank the community for this successful event and for two hours the volunteers began to come. There were individuals, school groups, business groups and Boy Scouts that came.

Packing began at noon and by 12:34 p.m., it was finished, 342 boxes to remind our soldiers of a little bit of home.

Josie Ehlers came to help because she received a box last year. A member of the Army National Guard, she was stationed in Kuwait. “I wanted to pay it forward,” she explained.

There were many families, couples and individuals who contributed as well as groups from Cannon Falls Schools, Randolph Schools and Boy Scouts of America Troop 39. Local businesses that donated food items to help support the event were Nick’s Diner, King’s Place Bar & Grill, Family Fare and Hi-Quality Bakery.

“This is truly a community event,” said Commander Hedstrom. “We wouldn’t be able to do this without them.”

Saturday marked the third annual event for the Post. Hedstrom said members of the post were brainstorming about doing something that the community could be involved with and the idea of packing boxes for deployed military came up.

“The first year we hoped to pack 30-40 boxes,” he said. “We wound up sending 93 boxes the first year and 293 boxes last year. We found that the volunteers that came to pack the boxes were very proud of being connected to the soldiers that we were packing the boxes for.”

This year 342 boxes were packed for shipping. “I can’t think of the community enough for everything they did to support this event for our military. We placed donation boxes throughout the community and they were filled. It was amazing to see how many turned out to pack boxes and how fast the packing went. Last year we were here until 3 or 4 p.m. With all the help this year, the packing went so fast,” said Hedstrom.

The Legion plans to continue to make this an annual event to be held in January each year and is already discussing how we can make this event even better next year.

**A conference just for women veterans is set**

MOUNDS VIEW — The 2020 Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs Women Veteran Conference will take place 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, April 4.

The event happens at the YMCA in Mounds View, at 3594 Edgewood Drive. The building also is the Mounds View Community Center.

The keynote speaker is Kearn Torkelson, survivor of the 2009 Fort Hood shooting.

Breakfast and lunch will be provided.

The Minnesota Woman Veteran of the Year Awards will be presented. The Minnesota Quilts of Valor Foundation will make a presentation.

Plus, there will be a resource fair, assistance with benefits, yoga, massages and workshops on topics such as Clothesline Project, Veteran Farming Initiative and a session with Minnesota’s women generals.

**Superior Shores**

These snowmobile riders look like they had a lot of fun.

**District 2 hosted speakers on veterans topics in Slayton.**

SLAYTON — Speakers at the 2nd District Public Relations/Community event Feb. 22 in Slayton, at the 4-H Building were: Tim Burley and Rebecca Kaas, MPA, MSL, disabled veterans outreach program specialist, with the Department of Labor Career Force, Marshall office.

Slayton was the place to be on Feb. 22. A whole lot of heart and preparation went into this event. “Success” will take participation on everyone’s part, even those that were invited to be there from the surrounding area and sister District.

Something new and different to bring us all into a spectrum of a better understanding of completion of “Our Mission.”

We hope you will think about what you see and hear, to help us take The American Legion further into the Public’s Eye, so it makes others want to be a part of what we do. Today is just a beginning to build on “Our Future.” Communication or the lack of it, will decide our future.

Help us, help others and we, The American Legion Family, will lead the way.

**Lhasa Apso**

APR registered healthy, $400 Puppies available now whites or colors 320-444-0889
Greetings from the mighty 1st District American Legion Family.

What a great honor and privilege we had this week to have National Commander James W. Bill Oxford in the District for a day visiting Posts and picture taking with all that the Posts did. The Posts did a wonderful job with the honor guards greeting him upon arrival, the meals and all accommodations.

Thank you!

Membership is still going strong, and there are still eligible veterans out there to join, just ask. Put on a membership night — burgers, tacos, soup and sandwich. Have the county veteran service officer come in and talk about the benefits of the VA, get your ID cards. Get signed up for your medical benefits through the county VSO before they are needed.

Continue to pray for our deployed troops that are defending our country and our freedoms. Their families also need our prayers and support. Do what is necessary to help these families through these times.

Thank you for your service, and support.

For God and country.

1st District
Jade Welkie

And they told me the news, I tried all night not to break down and cry. As the tears rolled down my face, I felt so cold and empty, like a lost soul out of place. And the minute this woman on the wall sees my smile; it fades again.

This is what happens to the younger veterans that have the passion and desire to lead an organization when they are continuously denied. They lose the passion that once was there and ask each other why we do even belong to an organization that does not appreciate our ideas and wants to keep the status quo.

The status quo is not the answer anymore. If we want to survive and be a driving force in our communities, new ideas and technology are found among the next generation of leaders. The young veterans have the means and capabilities to lead this great organization.

All generations have had a chance to make things better. Now it’s the younger veterans turn to take the driving force of this organization into the future. And it just makes me wonder, why so many lose, so few win? And give me something to believe in. It’s not a competition on how many years in a position. It should be about the future of the veterans we are fighting for, to make sure there is a future for them.

Ask yourself, this position, I have within the organization, or the hat I wear, am I doing anything for the betterment of the veterans, children and youth in my community?

Still Serving America.

3rd District
Linda Dvorak

Hello from the 3rd District. Although I believe that we are doing a much better job at our messaging, I just want to relay something I heard lately. A younger veteran that is getting ready to retire after serving 20 years (that’s younger in my book) in the National Guard and serving more than one tour in Iraq/Afghanistan mentioned that he went into a VFW/Legion club and was immediately impressed with what he was doing there by the “old” guys at the bar.

They told him he didn’t serve in a real service or in a war. Needless to say this guy left the club, never to return again.

Seriousness;

I also ran into someone I used to work with who recently retired from the military and she went into a Legion club in the town she moved to and tried to become a member; no one was there to “verify” that she was eligible. She also left and has not returned.

These are just two examples, both within a week.

Did you make it to see the American Legion Family, it’s also greatly appreciated by the residents of the Veterans Home.

On Saturday, March 14, St. Patrick’s Day at the Fergus Falls Veterans Home is our day of getting the veterans know we haven’t forgotten.

Do you want to be active in your Post, your District and in our Department as you possibly can.

“Do what you can, with what you have, where you are.” — Teddy Roosevelt

Until next month.

4th District
Joe Jansen

Fellow legionnaires, We had a very nice rally in Copenhagen in February attended by the whole Legion family from 4th District Auxiliary, S.A.L., and more. Never having to Montgome-
It’s an honor to have National officers pay visits

Mary Hendrickson

March is shaping up to be a very busy month. The weather is heating up and so is my calendar. I’m looking forward to the March 8 Leadership Workshop at the Forest Lake Post. It’s being led by our 2nd Vice President and Leadership Chairman Mary Kupers. I’ve been attending Auxiliary meetings and conventions since I was a small child. Nevertheless, I always learn something new or gain new energy from what I learn at a leadership workshop. Mary has scheduled several workshops, so please consider attending one of them.

On March 21, the American Legion Family is having its annual Appreciation Rally at La Crescent. There will also be a Department Executive Committee Meeting that day. Let’s hope for good weather and a big turnout of American Legion Family members.

Following the rally, Carl and I are taking a few days off in Laughlin, Nevada. I’m going to walk along the Colorado River and refresh my mind before the remaining four months of my term. Carl is thinking “golf,” so we’ll see what happens out there.

Looking backward, February was a fun and active month. The first stop was the Feb. 6 District Mid-Winter Meeting at Little Falls. This was followed by two roundtrips to Montgomery in one week.

Our Sweetheart Rally was well-attended. The food and camaraderie were excellent. I appreciated the midday rally, so we had a few hours of travel in light on the way home. Six days later, Carl and I had great fun at the Montgomery Valentine’s Day Dinner. Post members had wine and cheese, decorated the tables, served a wonderful meal to the Auxiliary members present and even had door prizes. This type of service I could really get used to!

As I’m writing this column, I’m just back from the National Commander’s Tour banquet in New Prague. This was a special evening. It’s always an honor to have a national office visit our Department. There was a wonderful turnout of American Legion Family members and the usual excellent meal prepared by New Prague Post 45.

National Commander Bill Oxford from the Department of North Carolina gave an interesting talk on his travels throughout the U.S. and internationally, as well as inspiring all of us with his projects on child welfare and veterans helping veterans.

Speaking of national visits, National American Legion Auxiliary President Nicole Clapp will visit Minnesota during April 6-8. President Nicole hails from the neighboring state of Iowa. Some of those traveling with her are anxious to show her the Servicewoman’s Center at the Minneapolis/St. Paul Airport, the Brain Science Center at the University of Minnesota, Hastings Veterans Home, the Minneapolis Veterans Home, and the St. Cloud VA Medical Center.

Nicole spent many years in the medical field. We can be very proud of the services we offer to veterans in Minnesota. Please be very kind and bring a meal during her visit on the three-day tour, and plan on joining us for one of the meals. The stops and contact information are listed in this edition of the Legionnaire.

Once again, thank you for all the invitations and contributions to my project. In this our centennial year, I appreciate all you do to “Remember, Honor, Serve” our veterans, active duty military and their families.

Mary Hendrickson is the president of the American Legion Auxiliary Department of Minnesota.

Presidential’s Column

Mary Hendrickson

President’s Column

Mary Hendrickson

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Mary Hendrickson is the president of the American Legion Auxiliary Department of Minnesota.

Feb. 19, 2020, Membership:

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Auxiliary Unit helps out female homeless veterans

Eagan American Legion Auxiliary Unit 594, with the support of Hy-Vee Eagan, is collecting used handbags, string backpacks and zippered cloth bags for homeless veterans. The project is Purse with Purpose. It will focus on supplying homeless veterans, women and men with personal hygiene supplies.

“We learned at the 2019 National American Legion Convention in Indianapolis that female homeless veterans, though fewer in number than homeless male veterans, have more difficulty taking care of themselves,” stated ALA Eagan Unit President Susan Flynn. “Often the female homeless veteran has been sexually traumatized while they were in the military and so when they separate from their service they often distance themselves from their VA, leaving benefits they should be applying for untouched. They may not want anything to do with the VA but they still need help.”

With grants from the Eagan Walmart, Burnsville Walmart and Eagan Sam’s Club, the Auxiliary Unit has initial funding to reach out and help where they can. The Community Resource and Referral Center, which works with homeless veterans in Minneapolis, will help them reach out once 5 months have passed and filled.

“Though spring is coming it is still difficult for the homeless to survive outside. We hope to ease veterans suffering. After all, they served our country and now it is time for us to serve them,” President Flynn added.

Make sure to get involved with your community

The American Legion Auxiliary Community Service program promotes visibility within our localities through our commitment to community, state and nation.

The Community Service program also promotes and follows the American Legion Auxiliary Mission to take care of veterans, active duty service members and their families. We are all asked to continue to promote our community service mission and the programs within our local unit and within our communities.

Another part of the American Legion Auxiliary Community Service program is to promote our visibility outside of our communities. We need to remember to wear our American Legion Auxiliary apparel and pins.

We have been hearing a lot about “branding” for the American Legion Auxiliary in the last few years, that means we need to be seen!

Community Service

Diane Hayes

Ideas

Member — reach out to local ministers and first responders to be a designated responder for veteran families in need. Be sure to keep a list of veteran resources handy so you will be ready.

Get involved with your neighbors and those outside our Legion Family by volunteering at your local library, food pantry, domestic violence shelter, senior citizen centers, assisted living centers, nursing homes.

Represent the Auxiliary as a member of local community boards and committees. You can volunteer at your local meals on wheels program.

Units — volunteer to organize or assist with your community’s Veterans Day observance. Organize and participate in service projects for veterans, service members, their families and local community programs on ALA suggested days of service.

Register service projects on websites, community forums and social media to attract other community members to participate in your service projects.

Volunteer for local service projects and causes (walks, special events, etc.). Work with your post home to offer space and their participation in local service projects and causes.

Sponsor and participate in activities at local libraries, senior citizen centers, assisted living centers, nursing homes, service projects and causes (walks, special events, etc.) Attend and represent the American Legion Auxiliary at special celebration events in the community such as holiday parades, festival parades, grand openings of community facilities and community leader recognition ceremonies.

The American Legion Auxiliary Community Service program is all about working together and making a difference for our veterans, their families and our communities.

Diane Hayes is the community service chairperson for the American Legion Auxiliary Department of Minnesota.

WHERE THE WILD THINGS ARE

Sandie Deutsch was invited to attend the Salute to Hospitalized Veterans Day at the Minneapolis VAHCS. It was a Valentines Party for the Veterans with many celebrities on hand. Attendees went to the Veterans rooms and presented each one with a blanket, cap and a homemade valentine card. Of the celebrities whom the Veterans really enjoyed visiting was retired Minnesota Wild star Wes Walz.

Make sure to get involved with your community

Secretary’s Notes

Sande Deutsch

All American Legion Auxiliary members from throughout the Department of Minnesota and beyond are invited to participate in a poppy ceremony.

For more, contact Dee Dee Buckley at 651-278-4355 or Norma Tramm at 320-385-8310.

Sande Deutsch is the executive secretary for the American Legion Department of Minnesota.

Special Events

Celebration of Life planned for Vicki Scardina Bibeau

There will be a Celebration of Life for Vicki Scardina Bibeau on Easter weekend at 1 p.m. Saturday, April 11, at the Spenser-Ross American Legion Post 134 in Walker, 407 Front St.

All American Legion Auxiliary members from throughout the Department of Minnesota and beyond are invited to participate in a poppy ceremony.

Come and get them

A new supply of the emblem magnets are for sale at the price of $3 each. They are available at the Department office in St. Paul.

Secretary’s Notes

Sande Deutsch

Well gang, time is flying and I am getting very excited and sad at the same time. Our new grandson is due the first of May and my retirement is only 5 months away — that is the exciting part. The sad part is knowing each of the upcoming events will be my last as your Executive Secretary. The friendships I have made throughout the last 9 years are endless and I will continue to hold each and every one of you in my heart. When I started all of the conferences, conventions and meetings were so “staff shorthanded.” I can’t function like that. To the entire American Legion Family I want to sincerely thank you for allowing “ثم” into what we do and going on my ride with me. I am now an official Ordained Minister, even got the official name badge. Who would have ever thought that?? My poor grandmother is probably shaking her head while looking down upon me. I just can’t wait to try out my “sermon” on Bill and Donna — you two asked for it. My shout out this month goes to the best staff in the whole wide world. I have managed many, many people in my career but Jan and Joyce are the best ever. The little hole Julie created by leaving left me scratching my head but Jocelyn filled that hole in a big hurry. I will miss those two the most. I am not done yet so you will have to put up with me for a few more issues. Happy St. Patrick’s Day and congratulations to my dear friend Don Hayden and his wife Mary as being named the St. Patrick’s Day Grand Marshalls in La Center. You’re buying Don!!

Sande Deutsch is the executive secretary for the American Legion Department of Minnesota.

 Guess what? Annual reports!

Yes, indeed, it is that time of year again. All Units should be preparing their reports covering the time period April 1, 2019, to March 31, 2020.

The Department copy of all reports must be mailed to the Department office on or before April 15.

Please mail one copy to your District president and keep one for your records. No matter how much or how little your Unit has been able to contribute in time, energy, resources and talent to our programs, it is important that everything be included in your reports.

Your reports make up our Department and National reports. You have all received your forms.

Let’s have a 100 percent turn-in this year.

Calendar of veterans sold well

Carolyn Ross of Cass Lake Unit 286 stated that a community project that was started in 2019 was so popular that they did it again in 2020. They have developed a calendar that features veterans from the Cass Lake area. There is no duplication of pictures. The Unit charges just a nominal fee to cover the printing costs.
Reverse Mortgages

The future doesn’t have to be uncertain.

The lower the Margin, the more you qualify for. Call for our low rates. Libor Margins as low as 1.5%. Call or email me for a free consumer guide and a personal quote.

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Mike Kraus
Loan Officer
NMLS ID #283509

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travel@4seasonsvacations.net

www.4seasonsvacations.com

Savannah & Charleston April 18 - 26, 2020
• 4 Seasons Tour Director Cindy Peterson
• Deluxe motorcoach transportation
• 8 nights accommodations
• 14 Meals
• Guided Trolley Tour of Savannah
• Guided tours of St Simons Island and Jekyll Islands
• Harbor Cruise in Charleston
• $1,699.00 per person double occupancy

NATIONAL PARKS Arizona & Utah May 8-18, 2020
• 4 Seasons Tour Director Cindy Peterson
• Deluxe motorcoach transportation
• 10 nights accommodations
• 15 Meals; 10 breakfasts, 1 lunch, 4 dinners
• 52 Mile Durango/Silverton Train Ride
• Admission to: Badlands, Mount Rushmore, Painted Desert Petrified Forest, Grand Canyon, Zion National Park, Bryce Canyon and Rainbow Point Guided Tour.
• $1,699.00 per person double occupancy

Rhine River Cruise June 17 - 27, 2020
• 4 Seasons Tour Director Glen Parsons
• Roundtrip Delta flights
• 2 nights accommodations at Superior hotels
• 7 night southbound cruise on the Vista
• All meals and entertainment onboard the Vista
• All transfers to and from the airport, hotel and ship
• All entrance fees outlined in the itinerary
• Luggage handling on the ship
• $6,899.00 per person double occupancy

Ark Encounter & Creation Museum June 14-19, 2020
• 4 Seasons Tour Director Cindy Peterson
• Deluxe motorcoach transportation
• 5 nights accommodations
• 9* Meals: 5 breakfasts, 2 dinners,*2 hot snack
• Judge Davis Mansion
• Creation Museum
• Ark Encounter
• Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption
• Dinner Cruise
• Lincoln Boyhood Home, Museum and Tomb
• Dana Thomas Home and Illinois Old state Capital
• $999.00 per person double occupancy

Summer on the Mississippi July 15-18, 2020
• 4 Seasons Tour Director Brenda Malpeisy
• Deluxe motorcoach transportation
• 3 nights accommodations
• 7 Meals: 3 breakfasts, 1 lunch, 3 dinners
• Day long cruise on the Celebration Belle
• Tours of the John Deere Pavilion and Isabel Bloom Studio
• History’s Channel’s American Pickers’ Antiques Archeology
• Beauty and the Beast at Circa ~21 Dinner Theater
• $689.00 per person double occupancy

Heart of Alaska July 15-22, 2020
• 4 seasons Tour Director Tammi Haney
• Nonstop Delta flights
• 7 nights superior accommodations
• 14 Meals; 7 breakfasts, 5 lunches, 2 dinners
• Iditarod Trail Headquaters with Sled Dog Demo
• Ride the Alaska Railroad in a Express Dome Car
• Denali National Park Natural History Tour
• Riverboat Discovery Cruise
• Mears Glacier - Chena Indian Village
• Prince William Sound - Pan for Gold at Dredge #8
• $3,799.00 per person double occupancy

Alaska Tour & Cruise August 15-29, 2020
• 4 Seasons Tour Director Tammi Haney
• Roundtrip Delta flights
• 7 nights accommodations
• 7 night Southbound Cruise on the Grand Princess®
• All meals and entertainment onboard the ship
• Onboard gratuities and transfers to/from pier
• All sightseeing/entrances fees as stated in itinerary
• $5,099.00 per person double occupancy

Irish Gold Sept. 26-Oct. 5, 2020
• 4 Seasons Tour Director Tammi Haney
• Roundtrip flights
• 8 nights accommodations with luggage handling
• 14 Meals
• Barney Castle
• Trinity College & The Book of Kells
• Cliffs of Moher • House of Waterford Crystal
• Ring of Kerry • Kylemore Abbey & Gardens
• $4,799.00 per person double occupancy

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