

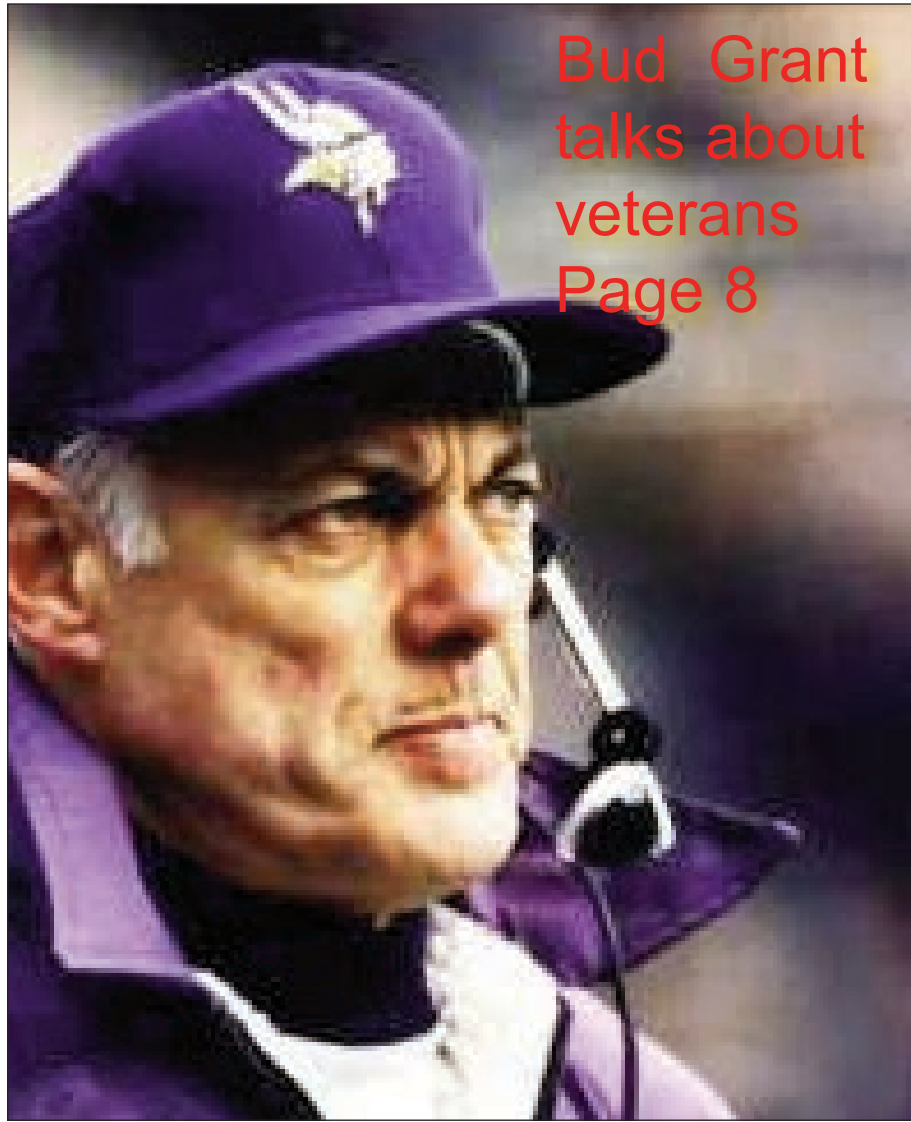


Legionnaire

Volume 96, Number 1

For God and Country

January 2014



**Bud Grant
talks about
veterans
Page 8**

National Commander's Tour set for Feb. 3-6

National Commander Dave Dellinger of Virginia will be making a tour of Minnesota in early February, stopping at 12 posts along the way.

Dellinger is from Vienna, Virginia, and was elected to the 2.4 million member organization this past year.

He is the chief executive officer and the official spokesman for The American Legion.

This year's trip will be mainly through southern Minnesota, starting in Pipestone and winding up four days later in Roseville. Contact numbers for the posts are listed on a chart on page 2. Members are expected to RSVP beforehand.

The tour includes:

Monday, Feb. 3: Pipestone, breakfast, 8 a.m.; Granite Falls, lunch, noon; Redwood Falls, dinner, 6 p.m.

Tuesday, Feb. 4: Olivia, breakfast, 8 a.m.; St. Peter, lunch, noon; Waseca, din-

ner, 6 p.m.

Wednesday, Feb. 5: Rochester Post 92, breakfast, 8 a.m.; Chanhassen, lunch, noon; Elk River, dinner, 6 p.m.

Thursday, Feb. 6: Minneapolis Post 1, breakfast, 8 a.m.; North Branch, lunch, noon; Rosetown Post, dinner, 6 p.m.

Times listed for the breakfast and lunch stops are when the National Commander will arrive. The breakfast and noon meals will be served about 20 minutes after the arrival of the National Commander's party.

There will be a social time an hour before the evening meal.

Dellinger will be traveling with his aide, and will be accompanied by Department Commander Mike Ash and Department Membership Director Tom Fernlund.

Dellinger was an army infantry officer and he served at Fort Benning during the Vietnam War. He

then entered the Army Reserves and retired in 1984 with the rank of captain.

He has been a member of Vienna Post 180 since 1982 and he has served as Department Commander in

Continued on Page 2



DAN DELLINGER

Minnesota House report gets cold reception

By Al Zdon

The Legislature fired its first shot on veterans housing in mid-December, and the commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs shot right back.

In a hearing held at the Capitol to look at a final report done for the Select Committee on Veterans Housing, Larry Shellito said the committee was crossing into the MDVA's "wheelhouse."

"I viewed this as a great opportunity to partner with this sub-committee and its powerful members to collaborate in developing a responsible way forward. Instead, what I received was a report rooted in the past."

Shellito called it a report "anchored to the state history, steeped in innuendos, short on substance regarding recommended costs, and long on assumptions. For me to allow this to be your final report is a blow to the members and purpose of this committee."

The report lists nine recommendations for legislation that would bring some fundamental changes to the veterans home system and the housing of aging veterans in general.

The recommendations were created by Minnesota House staff under the direction of the committee. The committee was chaired by Rep. Jerry Newton, DFL-Coon Rapids. Newton served over 20 years in the military.

The recommen-



HOUSE HEARING -- Deputy Commissioner of Veterans Affairs Michael Gallucci testified before the House Select Committee on Veterans Housing as Commissioner Larry Shellito listened. Shellito had earlier referred to the report as "rooted in the past."

dations included:

-- A tiered system should be set up where veterans with 70 percent disability should get priority for admission to the five state veterans homes over other veterans and spouses.

-- The veterans homes system should decentralize management and patient care.

-- Emphasis should be given on keeping veterans in their own homes as long as possible.

-- Domiciliary units at the Hastings and Minneapolis homes should be geared to return veterans to the community.

-- A study should be done to reduce costs at the state

homes. More federal money should be sought.

-- The "look back" rules, in which a veteran can transfer his or her assets to a third party a year before entering a veterans home, should be changed to a five-year period to match federal guidelines.

Shellito said the recommendations "did not provide enough information" to have a serious conversation with Gov. Dayton at this time.

Shellito concluded by saying, "I believe that many of your recommendations regarding the homes are either already in progress or would appear to be operationally

Continued on Page 2

National Commander's Tour Dates and Contacts

Location	Arrival Time	Meal	Contact Information
Monday, Feb. 3			
Pipestone Post 6	8 a.m.	Breakfast	Willis, 507-825-3211
Granite Falls Post 69	noon	Lunch	Dorian Gatchell, 320-981-0161
Redwood Falls Post 38	5 p.m. Social	Dinner (6 p.m.)	Jeannette Mertens, 507-828-7656, jlmerte@newulmtel.net
Tuesday Feb. 4			
Olivia Post 186	8 a.m.	Breakfast	Mike Harmon, 320-523-3767
St. Peter Post 37	Noon	Lunch	Post, 507-934-6435
Waseca Post 228	5 p.m. Social	Dinner (6 p.m.)	Post, 507-833-9935
Wednesday, Feb. 5			
Rochester Post 92	8 a.m.	Breakfast	Post, 507-252-1659
Chanhassen Post 580	noon	Lunch	Kenny, 952-934-6677, press 3
Elk River Post 112	5 p.m. Social	Dinner (6 p.m.)	Post Cdr., 763-234-8400
Thursday, Feb. 6			
Minneapolis Post 1	8 a.m.	Breakfast	Post, 612-721-3023
North Branch Post 85	Noon	Lunch	Post, 651-674-6100
Rosetown Post 542	5 p.m. Social	Dinner (6 p.m.)	Natasha, 651-483-3535

Those attending can make reservations, get more information, and determine the cost of the meal by calling the contact number at the post where the tour stop will be held.

The breakfast and lunch meals will be served about 20 minutes after the arrival of the National Commander. All times are dependent on weather and driving conditions.

National Commander's Tour Feb. 3-6

Continued from Page 1

Virginia.

At the national level, he chaired the Legislative, National Security and Economics Commissions. He also served as chairman of the Legislative Council and the Membership and Post Activities Committee.

Dellinger owned and operated a construction management and general contractor business for 20 years. He and his wife, Margaret have a son and daughter.

His theme for the year is: "Building for Tomorrow -- Today."

The National Commander will take pictures with posts that have achieved goal by the time of the National Commander's Tour. Each post will receive a certificate.

Each post handles its own meal and meal planning. Members are encouraged to call the numbers listed to find out about meal costs and to RSVP.

The arrival times at each post may be altered due to weather.

House report discredited by commissioner

Continued from Page 1

cumbersome. And finally, the Administrative and policy recommendations identified are unnecessary and would handcuff our ability to effectively manage."

Milt Schoen, legislative chairman for the Minnesota County Veterans Service Officers, said his organization was opposed to the proposed tier system in the report.

He called the recommendation to put disabled veterans at the top of the list "reverse means testing." He said, "It would be very regressive as a policy."

Schoen also warned that trying to make the veterans housing system blend with the federal system could be more difficult than the Legislature supposes. "The Minnesota Department of Human Services and the CMS (Center for Medicaid Services) are mentioned in the report and they have very different benefit structures from veterans benefits. I would not assume that applying their rules would work effectively when applied to veterans."

Doyle Neil, president of the CVSOs, argued against changing the "look back" system because many veterans become victims of service-related diseases such as ALS, Parkinson's or Leukemia that don't allow them to do proper estate planning. "Sticking with the one-day lookback period for these situations is the most ethically sound decision."

Neil said the state should only look at CMS (federal) certification as a "tool, a gap filler for only situations where it does not impact the veteran or the veteran's spouse."

Rep. Mary Murphy, DFL-Hermantown, a member of the committee, took issue with some of Shellito's opening remarks, particularly his statement that the report was not ready to be discussed with the governor, and a comment by Shellito that the Legislature should "really partner" with the Legislature.

"I'm not sure what that implies," she said.

Rep. Alice Hausman, DFL-St. Paul, who was a key player in establishing the select committee, said that Shellito's response to the Legislative committee was misplaced.

"I'm somewhat surprised he would attack the state. The motivation of this committee is that the federal system is broken. We are trapped in a system the federal government imposes on us."

Hausman cited the cap on veterans home nursing beds, and the lack of federal funding for building veterans homes.

Shellito said the state needs to work within the limits of the federal system. "The federal government is at best unpredictable."

Minnesota is capped at 1,058 nursing home beds for veterans by the federal government. It already has, according to the state, 990 active beds, meaning that none of the proposed new veterans homes at Willmar, Brainerd, Bemidji and Montevideo could be built.

In the end, the committee voted unanimously to adopt the report and forward it to the Legislature.

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Endorsements

Burt endorsed for Sgt.-at-Arms

American Legion Post 322 and the Second District has endorsed Clinton Burt for the Department of Minnesota Sergeant of Arms for the year 2014-15.

Burt served thirty years in the Military including eight years in the Air Force and thirty years in the South Dakota Air National Guard.

He is a life member of the Lionel Boudreau Post

322 Currie, Minnesota, and has served as Commander, Vice Commander, Chairman of the Bar Board and Membership Chairman.

He served the Second District as Vice Commander, First Vice Commander and as Commander in 2005-2006.

He also served as Judge Advocate, and V.A.V.S Chairman. Burt is the

Second/Seventh Districts Department Vice Commander at the present time, and is on his third term on the Minnesota American Legion Board of Publications.

On the national level, he is also a member of National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Council.



CLINTON BURT

Arizona survivor Ed Wentzlaff buried with his shipmates

Ed Wentzlaff of Milaca had prepared for years the details of his burial. He would be buried with his shipmates aboard the USS Arizona in Pearl Harbor.

Wentzlaff was one of 330 survivors of the bombing of the battleship on Dec. 7, 1941. Only a handful remain.

"It only makes sense," Wentzlaff told the Minnesota Legionnaire in 2009. "I was aboard the ship for three years before she was sunk. That's where all my friends are."

On Dec. 7, 2013, exactly 72 years after the bombing, Wentzlaff was buried at sea aboard the ship. Divers took his burial urn down to the ship in Pearl Harbor. He is now reunited with his friends.



Navy divers hold up Ed Wentzlaff's burial urn before they placed it aboard the USS Arizona.



The burial flag is presented to members of Wentzlaff's family.

Minneapolis VA named Center of Innovation

The Center for Chronic Disease Outcomes Research (CCDOR) at the Minneapolis VA Health Care System has been designated a Center of Innovation (COIN) by VA's Office of Research and Development.

"The COIN designation recognizes this medical centers expertise in research on a national level," said Kent Crossley, MD, Minneapolis VA Chief of Staff.

Only 19 of the 152 VA medical centers across the country have COINs. The purpose of a COIN site is to foster more timely and relevant research to address the needs of patients and providers.

According to CCDOR Director Steven Fu, MD, the Minneapolis COIN will focus on PTSD, Cancer Prevention/Screening and Chronic Pain.

"We are focusing on high priority topics that are extremely important to our Veterans and are fortunate to have some of the nation's leading researchers in all three of these areas," said Fu.

"The end result of our research will advance the quality of care delivered by the VA and hopefully improve lives."

Here are summaries of each area of research:

Evidence-Based Therapies for PTSD

Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is very prevalent among Veterans—combat Veterans in particular; thus, treating PTSD is a high priority for VA.

To support the goal of providing effective, evidence-based treatment for Veterans affected by PTSD, HSR&D has funded the CREATE initiative, "Evidence-Based Therapies for PTSD," with the overall goal of improving Veteran access to and engagement in evidence-based PTSD treatments.

Cancer Prevention and Screening

Cancer is the leading cause of death in the United States in people aged 45-64 years and the second leading cause of death among those over age 65. Because these age groups include 79% of the Veteran population, optimizing the provision of cancer prevention and screening services is highly relevant to improving Veteran health. Moreover, tobacco use is the leading cause of premature death in the United States and a major risk factor for cancer; it also is more prevalent among Veterans than in the general population. To support the goal to optimize the provision of cancer prevention and screening services to improve patient outcomes within the VA healthcare system, CCDOR investigators will pursue a number of projects to develop, evaluate and disseminate novel interventions to reduce the prevalence of tobacco use, and to optimize the appropriate use of cancer screening services.

Chronic Pain

Chronic pain is a major public health problem affecting more than 100 million adults in the United States and resulting in at least \$560-\$635 billion in healthcare costs and lost productivity each year. Additionally, treatment of pain with opioid analgesics has led to a second public health problem in recent years—an epidemic of prescription drug abuse and overdose. In the VA healthcare system, a majority of Veterans report at least moderate pain interference with daily activities, and overdose death rates are twice those in the general population. Chronic pain research is an emerging area for CCDOR, with a goal to improve functional outcomes for Veterans with chronic pain.

For more details on the Minneapolis COIN, see: www.hsr.d.research.va.gov/centers/ccdor.cfm

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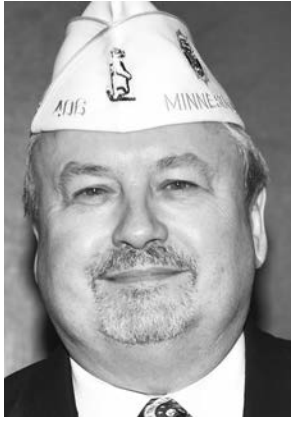
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COMMANDER'S COLUMN

By Mike Ash



I'd like to start off hoping that 2014 will be the best year ever for each of you.

A good way to start is making a New Year's resolution that you will learn more about one of the American Legion programs you haven't had much contact with. Then every-time you get the chance to spread the word to anyone, share what you've learned. The response you're looking for is "I didn't know the Legion did that." By getting the word out, and defining what the Legion does and what we do as Legionnaires, we are practicing brand awareness. Very simply, when you hear "Apple" or "McDonalds" or even "Google" – something specific rings up in your mind. We want that same instant recognition for "American Legion."

However, it is up to each of us to paint that mental picture that others will see when they hear those words. How great will it be when an American Legion logo on a billboard means the same to every veteran as the big red-and-white SA signs brings a sigh of relief to those drivers whose gas gauge is approaching "E."

Attending Legion Day with the Minnesota Golden Gophers basketball team and watching them play reminded me how the Legion needs to work together at Post, District and Department level. That night, although the Gophers

Mail Call

Hjermstad Story

To the Editor:

Thank you Al Zdon and the MN Legionnaire for the wonderful feature on Cannon Falls' Arnold Hjermstad and his World War II experiences. Long after the demise of Hitler and the atrocities of that great struggle, Arnie Hjermstad is still going strong. He still has his original army-issue bugle, and Hermann Goering's Iron Cross. At ninety five he still greets customers everyday at the family hardware store. We must continue to remember and thank these great warriors of that time in history. Is he then an icon of America's greatest generation? Absolutely. He's a catalyst of community endeavor and national acclaim. He is undoubtedly one of the best of the best.

James Edlund

Cannon Falls

Fought in Great Britain

To the Editor

I would like to add another name to the honour roll of those Americans who fought for Great Britain prior to America's entry into World War II. His name was Ralph Freiberg, a native of Eitzen, MN, a small community on the Iowa border in the far southeastern corner of Minnesota. I am enclosing a copy of the story that was published in our local newspaper. The tribute to Ralph Freiberg was given at the Memorial Day service held in 2012.

In the story, written by my wife, she noted that she contacted staff at St. Paul's Cathedral and was told that every effort would be made to have the Roll of Honour opened to the page on which Ralph Freiberg's name was written on our Memorial Day. As it turned out, filming for the Queen's Jubilee was being made by NBC and one morning on the Today Show, that book was shown and there it was: Ralph's name. It was an act of kindness and remembrance. Although we are 70 + years removed from that time, there is still appreciation for sacrifices made.

Thank you for all you do to acknowledge veterans and promote their legacy.

Tom Murphy, Commander

Loveless-Eikens American Legion Post 191
Caledonia

National Commander letter

(Note: the following letter was sent to and was printed by the Minneapolis Star Tribune. It was in response to a story in the newspaper about the demise of American Legion and VFW restaurants and bars in the state in recent years.)

The Minneapolis Star 'Tribune

Opinion@startribune.com

Editor:

Re: Dec. 14 article, "Minnesota VFWs American Legions selling off their meeting halls"

As National Commander of the nation's largest veterans'

beat the Nebraska-Omaha Mavericks, they did so in what I (and fellow attendee Jim Kellogg) felt was in a haphazard manner, using more individual force than skill. When a player got the ball and decided he should do the job himself, he was successful about 15% of the time. However, when players decided to set and pass the ball around, it usually got to the player in the best position and they hit the most important 3-pointer. Whenever we have an event at any level in the Legion, whether it's a fund-raiser, breakfast, rally, or something else, one person cannot do the job by themselves – these are "team" events and will only succeed with us all working as a team.

We need to remain vigilant on what our government is doing concerning veterans benefits. The recently passed 2-year budget has once again demonstrated that words from our elected officials that promise to protect veteran's rights are often nothing more than that – words. Cutting disabled and retired veterans benefits by reducing Cost of Living Allowances (COLA) again shows that they would rather cut earned benefits than reduce pork barrel spending. Additionally, our local officials have put forward recommendations to change the way the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs allow veterans and widows into our state veterans homes. Instead of the current fair way of first-come, first-served, they want to set up a tier, where those veterans who will bring in the most money will be the first (and in some cases) the only ones able to get in. These recommendations were forwarded to the Governor and Legislature, who will craft legislation in an attempt to force these recommendations down the throats of the MDVA and Minnesota veterans. Along with the Commanders Task Force, we will remain stalwart to stop these bills from becoming law. We need your help. When this type of destructive legislation is introduced, we need as many Legion caps in the gallery as possible. And those of you who can't be there in person, contact your representative and tell them you are watching and you want them to vote no. Personal visits, phone calls, emails and letters are all tools at our disposal to voice our feelings. Thank you.

service organization, I am always concerned about posts that have shrinking membership. The American Legion was not founded to run bars and banquet halls, but to serve as an advocate for our nation's veterans, operate first class youth programs, promote patriotism and stand tall for America's national defense.

While your article pointed out the problems faced by one American Legion post, it ignored the new posts that are popping up on college campuses and our many thriving posts spread throughout the country. In fact, there are more American Legion posts in the United States than there are Starbucks coffee houses. It also ignored the thousands of highly trained American Legion service officers who assist veterans with their benefits, free of charge, regardless of their membership in the organization.

Indeed your piece brings to mind an article in the Wall Street Journal that said of The American Legion, "The old members are dying off and the young ones aren't interested ... Across the U.S.A., it is much the same. The American Legion, once a hub around which resolved so much of community, social and civic life is slowly ebbing in importance..." Of course the Wall Street Journal article was published in 1971. Looks like the Star Tribune is intent on making the same mistaken assumptions.

Daniel M. Dellinger
National Commander
The American Legion

VA expands benefits for TBI

WASHINGTON – Some Veterans with traumatic brain injury (TBI) who are diagnosed with any of five other ailments will have an easier path to receive additional disability pay under new regulations developed by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The new regulation, which takes effect 30 days from today, impacts some Veterans living with TBI who also have Parkinson's disease, certain types of dementia, depression, unprovoked seizures or certain diseases of the hypothalamus and pituitary glands.

Eligibility for expanded benefits will depend upon the severity of the TBI and the time between the injury causing the TBI and the onset of the second illness. Servicemembers who are within 180 days of discharge may also file a pre-discharge claim for TBI online through the VA-DoD eBenefits portal at www.eBenefits.va.gov/ebenefits.

The published final rule is now available at <http://www.regulations.gov>.

Correction

An email address in the last issue in a story about the Veteran Resilience Project of Minnesota was listed incorrectly. The correct address is: camundson@emdrhap.org.

Chaplain's Corner

By
Richard Wog



Veteran's Day is over. What did you do that day? Did someone say thank you for serving? Or did you get a chance to say thank you to someone else for serving? I went to school and had lunch with my grandson Matthew, who is in fifth grade. It will be the last time I get to do that with him. Matthew brown bags his lunch, so I did the same. I made a sausage and cheese sandwich and may I say it tasted good. As we were eating and talking, you have to do both fast as you really don't get a lot of time to eat, some of his classmates sat with us. They were full of questions. It was a lot of fun to be with my grandson. As we were eating and talking, some of the young children came to our table and shook my hand and said thanks for serving. I am only a short person, but that really makes you feel tall, real tall.

Just before that I received a card in the mail. It was from my Post 545 Spicer. I opened the card thinking it was an invitation to the Veteran's Day dinner, but it was not. It said, "Thank you soldier." What a wonderful thing to get. It said so much. I cannot put it all in this letter. One paragraph read, "You will never meet all that you fought to protect, but for each of us, we know you as — a soldier, a veteran, an American hero." This card was sent from the Spicer Post Auxiliary and SAL.

This past weekend, we said goodbye to our son Troy. Troy is in the South Dakota National Guard. He and the rest of his company will be going to Afghanistan. For some it will be their first deployment and for others their second or even third. Their activation ceremony was held in a high school. It seats 3,000 people and it was over that. What a send-off for those soldiers. We did get to say goodbye as a family Saturday morning before the opening formation. As the time got closer, there were more tears and hugs. We left and went to the hallway. When the formation started I went in to watch. How proud I was of my son, but also of all those men and women who were standing and looking proud. I know there have been many deployments like this and I know I was not the only one who felt that way. With a big lump in my throat and a tear, we left. I pray that this war will come to an end soon. I also know this prayer is not just mine, but has been going on for a long time.

February is the time we hear about the four chaplains. Early on the morning of February 3, 1943, a troop ship, the U.S.A. Dorchester, was wallowing through the icy seas of Greenland. It had 900 troops on board. The ship was hit by a torpedo. There were four chaplains aboard. The chaplains led the men to boxes of life jackets and passed them out to the soldiers. When the boxes were empty, the chaplains took their own and gave them to four young soldiers and told them to jump. As the ship was sinking the chaplains were standing on the slanting deck, their arms linked in prayer to the one God they all served. Those men were from four different faiths. One was Reformed Church of America, another Jewish, another Catholic and the last was Methodist. It was just as the chaplains serve today for our military, and just as our Legion chaplains serve us. I am so proud of each of you. I say thank you. Keep them in your hearts and prayers.

Be safe and good health. For God and country.

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Al Zdon, Editor

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What's Happening

Legal Clinic for Veterans

The Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans, in partnership with the law firm of Fredrikson & Byron, will hold a drop-in legal clinic for veterans. Child Support, employment, benefits, expungement and debt collection will be addressed.

The clinic will be held on Tuesday, Jan. 14, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Minneapolis VA Medical Center Auditorium.

For more information, contact Sara Sommarstrom, 651-224-0292 or email ssommarstrom@mac-v.org.

Bowling Volunteers Needed

Moorhead Post 21 is hosting the 67th annual Minnesota American Legion Bowling Tournament from Feb. 22 to April 13. The post will be providing shuttle service between the motels and the post. Drivers are needed.

Volunteers are also needed to work at the bowling alley for eight weekends to coordinate the Kangaroo and Clean 30 games and to sell t-shirts. Contact Gary Olson, 218-233-5130 or email garyholson@702com.net.

Physically Disabled Hunt

The 10th annual Physically Disabled Turkey Hunt will be held at Camp Ripley from May 6-8. Veterans interested should contact Dennis Erie at 320-255-6365 for application instructions.

The hunt is for physically disabled veterans who are receiving VA outpatient care or are eligible to receive such care and cannot hunt during the regular firearms season.

The American Legion is one of the co-sponsors of the hunt.

Sweetheart Rally

The annual Sweetheart Rally will be held Saturday, Feb. 1, at Waite Park Post 172. Membership turn-in will be from 3-4:30 p.m. with a dinner at 5. The program will follow.

Round Tables

The St. Croix Valley Civil War Round Table will feature "1863: The Wilderness, Spottsylvania, North Ana and Cold

Harbor" with speaker Stoney Stonecipher. The meeting will be held on Monday, January 27, at the Lowell Inn in Stillwater. For information or reservations for dinner, contact Steve Anderson at 715-386-1268 or by emailing him at rossandhaines@comcast.net.

The World War II Round Table will have "The War on the Eastern Front." It will feature a speaker and veterans of the Eastern Front. The meeting will be held at the Fort Snelling History Center at 7 p.m. on Thursday, Jan. 9. Admission is \$5.

The Rochester Veterans Round Table will feature "U.S. Airforce: Korea to the Cuban Missile Crisis," with speaker Phil Goplen. The meeting will be held on Monday, Jan. 13, at the Rochester Assembly of God Church at 7 p.m. Admission is \$5.

Cancer Study

The VA Cooperative Studies Program 577 trial entitled "Colonoscopy vs. Fecal Immunochemical Test" is enrolling participants at the Minneapolis VA Medical Center. Eligibility includes veterans from 50-75 years old, due for a colorectal cancer screening, with symptoms of the disease, and no strong family history of colorectal cancer. For more information, contact Ruth Anway or Mary Lindquist at 612-467-2860.

New Minneapolis VA Ramp

The new ramp at the Minneapolis VA Medical Center will open sometime in January. There will be separate parking areas for visitors, patients and staff. It will create 640 additional parking spaces. There will be 420 patient and visitor spaces.

Calendar out

The 2014 Minnesota American Legion calendar has been mailed. The calendar is not sent to every member. If you did not receive a calendar and would like one, please contact the Department Headquarters, 651-291-1800 or 1-866-259-9163.

The calendar is a fundraiser for the Department. It features the winning pictures in a photo contest. Members

were asked to send in their service photos, and the 12 best were used in the calendar.

New Clinics

The Department of Veterans Affairs has announced two new clinics in Minnesota.

Valor Healthcare of Louisville, Ky., (Humana) has been awarded a \$28 million contract to operate two new VA community-based outpatient clinics (CBOCs) at Albert Lea and Shakopee.

The Shakopee clinic will be located at 1100 Shakopee Town Center. The Albert Lea clinic will be at Skyline Mall, 1665 West Main Street.

The clinics will provide primary care, mental health counseling, and telemedicine services. They are expected to open in mid-2014.

They will be part of the Minneapolis VA Health Care System.

Centennial Website

The American Legion has developed a new website as part of the 2018-19 American Legion centennial. Posts are encouraged to tell their stories and put them on the website: centennial.legion.org.

Already 36 states, including Minnesota, have had posts use the website. It is hoped that there will be 100 percent participation by the time of the Centennial.

Baseball postings made

The appointments for positions at 2014 National American Legion Tournaments has been announced:

Jeff Miller of Moorhead has been named the Tournament Director at the Mid-South Tournament in N. Little Rock, Ark.

Mike Gort, Marshall, will be the Tournament Director at the Northeast Tournament in Middletown, Conn.

David Kunz has been selected as the Assistant Tournament Director at the Central Plains Tournament in Fargo, N.D.

Dick Jonckowski will be the PA announcer at the 2014 American Legion World Series at Shelby, N.C.

Taps

Lyke, William, 82, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Dec. 21, 2013. He was active in The American Legion, serving as First District Commander from 2001-02. He also was active in the planning of several state conventions. He was a past commander and served on the honor guard of Rochester Post 92.

Holliday, Merle "Doc," 85, Army Air Corps veteran of World War II, Korean War and the Vietnam War. He served in Japan, Pakistan and Taiwan. He retired from the Air Force in 1969. He served as First District Commander, 1984-85, district adjutant for three terms, and Department Vice Commander from 1986-87. He was involved in the Boys State program for many years.

Peterson, Dale R., 84, Navy veteran of the Korean War, died Nov. 30, 2013. He served on the USS Hamul (AD-20) and was a communications specialist. He was a Ninth District Commander from 2012-13 and was serving on the Department Executive Committee. He was a past commander of Breckenridge Post 53.

Schweiss, Dennis Albert, 78, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Dec. 14, 2013. He was a member of Fairfax Post 205.

Johnson, Garry Lee, 78, Air Force veteran of the Korean War, died Dec. 13, 2013. He was a past commander of North Branch Post 85.

Fostervold, Wayne "Pinky," 86, Navy veteran of World War II, died Nov. 22, 2013. He served on the USS Dixie in the Pacific. He was a member of Willmar Post 167.

Terhune, Jimmie, 83, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Nov. 19, 2013. He was a member of Willmar Post 167.

Sand, Werner P., 85, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Dec. 11, 2013. He was a member of St. Joseph Post 328.

Nugent, Eugene R. "Butch," 63, Army veteran of the Vietnam War, died Dec. 17, 2013. He earned two Purple Hearts and the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry. He served with the Ninth Infantry Division. He was a member of Sauk Rapids Post 254.

Eauser, Richard Earl, 95, Army veteran of World War II, died Nov. 4, 2013. He was awarded the Purple Heart by President Truman. He was a member of Winona Post 9.

Luedtke, Herman "Bud" A., 90, Army veteran of World War II, died Nov. 8, 2013. He earned the Bronze Star. He was a member of Winona Post 9.

McCauley, M.J. "Mac," 90, Marine Corps veteran of World War II, died Dec. 8, 2013. He served in the Pacific. He was a past commander of Winona Post 9.

Miller, John, 86, Army veteran of World War II, died Dec. 1, 2013. He was a member of Bertha Post 366.

Peterson, Dorwin R., 90, Army veteran of World War II, died Nov. 29, 2013. He was a past commander of Waseca Post 228.

Krystosek, Edward G. 83, Air Force veteran of the Korean War, died Dec. 1, 2013. He was a finance clerk and served in Okinawa. He was a member of Thief River Falls Post 117.

Ziegelmann, Gary Olaf "Zeke," 62, Army Air Force veteran of the Vietnam War, died Nov. 15, 2013. He served in Thailand and Germany. He retired after 20 years of service. He was a member of Alexandria Post 87.

Garretson, Robert Max, 68, Navy veteran of the Vietnam War, died Nov. 27, 2013. He served aboard the USS Enterprise (CVAN-65) and was on board during the tragic fire in January 1969. He was a member of Alexandria Post 87.

Mork, Marvin Ray, 82, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Nov. 28, 2013. He was a member of Alexandria Post 87.

Donaldson, Michael "Mack," 73, Army National Guard veteran of the Vietnam War, died Dec. 5, 2013. He was in the Reserves. He was a member of Lakefield Post 4.

Anschutz, Donald John Herman, 84, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Dec. 4, 2013. He received two Purple Hearts in Korea. He was a past commander of Lakefield Post 4.

Blanshan, David Jon, 70, Army veteran of the Vietnam War, died Dec. 13, 2013. He served at Fort Eustis, Virginia. He was a member of Windom Post 206.

Soleta, Bernard A., 94, Army veteran of World War II, died Dec. 15, 2013. He landed at Normandy on the third day of the invasion and earned a Purple Heart. He was a member of Windom Post 206.

Gearman, Kent M., 70, Navy veteran of the Vietnam War, died Dec. 5, 2013. He was a member of Marietta Post 156.

Nelson, Don C., 72, Army veteran of the Vietnam War, died Dec. 18, 2013. He was a member of Little Falls Post 46.

Bickell, Irving William, 86, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Nov. 29, 2013. He was a member of Waseca Post 228.

Goblirsch, Raymond J., 89, Army veteran of World War II, died Nov. 28, 2013. He served in Europe. He was a member of Wabasso Post 263.

Blommer, John M., 81, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Dec. 6, 2013. He was a member of St. Joseph Post 328.

Latheria, JoAnn Person, 90, Army veteran of World War II, died Dec. 3, 2013. She was a nurse and served in the Pacific. She was a member of Morris Post 29.

Plantenberg, Bernard "Ben," 88, Navy veteran of World War II, died Dec. 4, 2013. He was a member of Eden Valley Post 381.

Smith, William, 76, Army veteran of the Vietnam War, died Nov. 13, 2013. He served in Paris, France. He was a member of Staples Post 70.

Wright, William A., 85, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Nov. 3, 2013. He was a member of Aurora Post 241.

Easterday, Lloyd Amos, 89, Navy veteran of World War II, died Nov. 22, 2013. He was a seaman first class. He was a member of Lakefield Post 4.

Ness, Kenneth R., 94, Army veteran of World War II, died Nov. 26, 2013. He served with the 762nd Tank Battalion in the Pacific. He was sergeant and a commander of a Sherman Tank. He was a past chaplain of Litchfield Post 104.

Nelson, Paul, 86, Navy veteran of World War II, died Dec. 2, 2013. He was a member of Chanhassen Post 580.

Johnson, Harold F., 98, Army veteran of World War II, died Nov. 28, 2013. He was a member of Chisago City Post 272.

Schoen, Robert, 82, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Nov. 28, 2013. He was a member of Cloquet Post 262.

Waits, Ronald Edwin, 81, Air Force veteran of World War II, died Nov. 9, 2013. He was a staff sergeant, pilot instructor and used the Link Trainer. He was a member of Waconia Post 150.

Ovik, Alvis S., 81, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Dec. 7, 2013. He was an artillery sergeant. He was a member of Mora Post 201.

Straub, Wallace W., 80, Navy veteran of the Korean War, died Nov. 24, 2013. He was a member of Chanhassen Post 580.

Trom, Darrel G., 64, Army veteran of the Vietnam War, died Nov. 5, 2013. He served in Colorado and Georgia. He was a member of Blooming Prairie Post 52.

Galama, John E., 82, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Nov. 24, 2013. He served in Maryland. He was a member of St. Joseph Post 328.

Schmidt, Albert J., 85, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Nov. 27, 2013. He was a member of Morris Post 29.

Ross, Darrel D., 85, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Nov. 22, 2013. He was a member of Round Lake Post 461.

Durgin, Franklin Charles, 94, Army veteran of World War II, died Nov. 25, 2013. He served in the 66th Field Artillery in the Third Army. He served on the front line and earned a Purple Heart. He was a member of Plainview Post 179.

Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

By
Tom Newman



VA New Benefit

The Federal VA has granted up to one year retroactive benefits for veterans filing fully developed claims to help reduce the backlog.

The new benefit takes effect August 6 for first-time filers.

The Department of Veterans Affairs announced that Veterans filing an original Fully Developed Claim (FDC) for service-connected disability compensation may be entitled to up to one-year of retroactive disability benefits. The retroactive benefits, which are in effect Aug. 6, 2013, through Aug. 5, 2015, are a result of a comprehensive legislative package passed by Congress and signed into law by President Obama last year.

“VA strongly encourages Veterans to work with their County Veteran Service Officers and Veteran Service Organizations to file Fully Developed Claims and participate in this initiative, since it means more money in eligible Veterans’ pockets simply by providing VA the information it needs up front,” said Allison A. Hickey, Under Secretary for Benefits. “At the same time, it helps reduce the inventory of pending claims by speeding the process.”

Filing an FDC is typically the fastest way for Veterans to receive a decision on their claims because Fully Developed Claims require Veterans to provide all supporting evidence in their possession when they submit their claims. Often, this is evidence that VA legally must attempt to collect on the Veteran’s behalf, which is already in the Veteran’s possession, or is evidence the Veteran could easily obtain, like private treatment records.

When Veterans submit such evidence with their claims, it significantly reduces the amount of time VA spends gathering evidence from them or other sources — often the longest part of the claims process. While VA will still make efforts to obtain federal records on the Veterans’ behalf, the submittal of non-federal records (and any federal records the Veteran may have) with the claim allows VA to issue a decision to the Veteran more quickly. Typically, VA processes FDCs in half the time it takes for a traditionally filed claim.

FDCs can be filed digitally through the joint, DoD-VA online portal, eBenefits (www.ebenefits.va.gov). VA encourages Veterans who cannot file online to work with an accredited Veterans Service Organization (VSO) who can file claims digitally on Veterans’ behalf. While submitting an FDC provides a faster decision for any compensation or pension claim, only Veterans who are submitting their very first compensation claim as an FDC are potentially eligible for up to one-year of retroactive disability benefits under the newly implemented law.

FDCs help eliminate VA’s claims backlog because they increase production of claims decisions and decrease waiting times. Also, VA assigns FDCs a higher priority than other claims which means Veterans receive decisions to their claim faster than traditional claims.

VA continues to prioritize other specific categories of claims, including those of seriously wounded, terminally ill, Medal of Honor recipients, former Prisoners of War, the homeless and those experiencing extreme financial hardship. As part of its drive to eliminate the claims backlog in 2015, VA also gives a priority to claims more than a year old.

In May, VA announced a new partnership with Veterans Service Organizations and others known as the “Community of Practice,” an effort that seeks to reduce the compensation claims backlog for Veterans by increasing the number of FDCs filed by Veterans and their advocates.

VA is continuing to implement several initiatives to meet the Department’s goal to eliminate the claims backlog in 2015. In May, VA announced that it was mandating overtime for claims processors in its 56 regional benefits offices to increase production of compensation claims decisions through the end of FY 2013. In April, VA launched an initiative to expedite disability compensation claims decisions for Veterans who have a waited a year or longer.

As a result of these initiatives, VA’s total claims inventory remains at lower levels not seen since August 2011. The number of claims in the VA backlog — claims pending over 125 days — has been reduced by 17 percent compared to the highest point in March 2013.

Veterans can learn more about disability benefits on the joint Department of Defense—VA web portal eBenefits at www.ebenefits.va.gov, and the FDC program at www.benefits.va.gov/fdc/.

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Pheasant Dinner Program raises \$42,000

The 72nd Annual Hospitalized Veterans Pheasant Dinner program had another successful year. Thus far, there are 225 Posts, Units, Squadrons, and Voitures who have donated, plus other donations for a total of 238.

The patients at the 14 hospitals or veterans homes enjoyed this special meal of pheasant and all the trimmings.

A total of 1,587 pheasants were used for the dinners. The price was again \$7 per bird, the same as last year. Maiden Rock Pheasants was the supplier of the birds needed for the dinners. The legion’s share of the cost for the pheasants was \$9,482.32.

Facilities involved are Minneapolis, St. Cloud, Sioux Falls, and Fargo VAMC’s; Minnesota and Wisconsin Veterans Homes at Minneapolis, Fergus Falls, Hastings, Dresbach, Silver Bay and Luverne, the veterans in St. Peter, and Good Samaritan Society Nursing Home in Brainerd, Post Home 167 – Willmar, and Post Home 602 – Hillman.

The V.F.W. is a partner in the Pheasant Dinner only and not in the American Legion’s dedicated fund.

American Legion money donated, as part of this report, including the Legion’s share of the cost of pheasants is \$42,069.89 or \$5,892.97 less than last year. With this year’s donations, a total of \$1,735,557.88 has been donated to the Pheasant Dinner Program since the Dedicated Fund was established 33½ years ago. The money above the cost of the pheasants, \$32,587.57 has been placed in the dedicated fund.

This past year, \$15,000 was spent on three projects. This amount, plus the Legion’s share of the cost of pheasants totaled \$24,348.92 spent to aid hospitalized and disabled veterans.

Since the dedicated fund was established, \$1,542,391.33 has been spent on 697 projects. If you include the Legion’s share of the pheasants used over the past 33½ years, it would bring the total expenditures to \$1,641,308.50.

The projects are evaluated by Pheasant Dinner Chairman Chuck Stone and, in some instances, reviewed by the entire committee, and must be approved by us before they can be funded.

There are many on-going projects which are funded every year at the VAMC’s such as, Emergent Need Fund, Canteen Books, Transportation Fund for wheelchair patients and Holiday Funds.

There are many other projects which space does not permit me to cover. A complete list of all projects is always at the Convention Pheasants Display Booth — along with listing sheets of donations.

The second district again led all districts in donations with \$15,549.89 nearly 37% of all donations in the state. Steele County led all counties in Legion donations with \$9,686.00 for 1,384 pheasants. Faribault County is second with \$4,500.00 for 683 pheasants. With combined Legion/VFW donations, Steele County is 1st in the state with \$16,886.00 for 2,384 pheasants.

There were 24 donations of 50 or more pheasants (one more than last year).

For posts, Owatonna is first with \$8,686.00 for 1,241 pheasants. Winnebago is 2nd with \$2,000.00 for 286 pheasants. Elmore is 3rd with \$1,500.00 for 214 pheasants. Welcome is 4th with \$1,050.00 for 150 pheasants. Three posts placed 5th with \$1,000.00 for 143 pheasants: Blooming Prairie, Byron and Chanhausen.

Followed by: Mankato 104, Plato 100, Eagle Lake 71, Springfield 71, Rosemount 66, Chaska 57, Clearwater 57, Kiester 55, Lewisville 54, Waseca 51, Willmar 51, Winona 51, Jackson 50, Melrose 50, Maple Lake 50, Marshall 50, New Ulm 50,

Posts donating less than 50 pheasants are listed below without numbers.

Ada, Adrian, Aitkin, Albany, Amboy, Anoka, Argyle, Arlington, Austin, Backus, Bagley, Balaton, Bayport, Bellechester, Belle Plaine, Belview, Benson, Bertha, Bigelow, Bird Island, Blue Earth, Bowlus, Breckenridge, Brewster, Brooklyn Center, Browns Valley, Brownton, Caledonia, Cannon Falls, Ceylon, Chandler, Clara City, Clarissa, Clarkfield, Cleveland, Clinton, Cokato, Comfrey, Cosmos, Currie, Danube, Darfur, Dawson, Deer Creek, Deer River, East Grand Forks, Easton, Eden Valley, Edgerton, Elk River, Ellsworth, Ely, Elysian, Emmons, Erskine, Eyota, Fairfax, Fairmont, Faribault, Flensburg, Freeborn, Fulda, Gary, Gaylord, Glencoe, Golden Valley, Gonvick, Good Thunder, Granite Falls, Green Isle, Hardwick, Harmony, Hastings, Hayfield, Hazel Run, Hector, Heron Lake, Hills, Hitterdal, Hoffman, Holdingford, Holland, Houston, Howard Lake, Hugo, Janesville, Jeffers, Karlstad, Kensington, Kilkenny,

LaFayette, Lake Benton, Lake City, Lake Crystal, Lakefield, Lancaster, LeCenter, Lester Prairie, Lino Lakes, Litchfield, Little Falls, Mabel, Marietta, Millerville, Minnesota Lake, Montgomery, Monticello, Moorhead, Morristown, Mountain Lake, Nassau, New Brighton, New Germany, New Prague, Nisswa, North Branch, Northfield, Northrop, Norwood-Young America, Okabena, Olivia, Orr, Osseo, Ostrander, Parkers Prairie, Park Rapids, Paynesville, Pequot Lakes, Pillager, Pine Island, Pinewood, Plainview, Porter, Preston, Princeton, Prior Lake, Proctor, Raymond, Redwood Falls, Rosemount, Rothsay, Round Lake, Rush City, Sacred Heart, St. Bonifacius, St. Charles, St. James, St. Joseph, St. Leo, St. Paul Park, St. Peter, Sanborn, Savage, Sherburn, Spicer, Storden, Tracy, Trimont, Underwood, Villard, Virginia, Wabasso, Wanda, Warroad, Wayzata, Wells, Whalan, Winthrop, Woodbury, wood Lake, Worthington, Zumbrota.

Minneapolis Posts: Aviation, Calhoun, Falldin, Northside, University of Minnesota, Viking. St. Paul Posts: Frogtown, Hamline, Public Safety, Lester Tjernlund. SAL Squadrons: Bellechester, Belle Plaine, Blooming Prairie, Morristown, Owatonna, Wayzata. Other Donations: John Nelson, Faribault County Council, Donald Waldbillig, Rayne Brant, Terry Lydell, Mike Maxa, Blooming Prairie Lion’s Club, Blooming Prairie VFW Post 878

There were 23 Minnesota American Legion Auxiliary Units donating this year. The Bemidji Auxiliary Unit was the top donating unit with 71 birds. Other Auxiliary Units donating were: Lewisville 29, Kasson 21, Owatonna 21, Fairmont 18, Adams 12, Bellingham 10 Staples 10, Lake Benton 8, Ceylon 7, Millerville 7, Pine City 7, Sauk Centre 7, Belle Plaine 5, Morristown 5, Bricelyn 4, Park Rapids 4, Ellsworth 3, Trimont 1.

A pheasant pin will be awarded to one representative of every Post, Unit, Squadron, and Voitures participating, and will be available to be picked up at the Pheasant Display Booth at the Department Convention next summer.

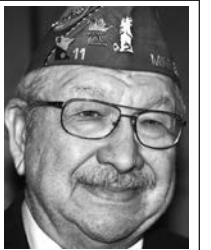
“Our committee wishes to thank everyone for making this another outstanding year for the Hospitalized Veterans Pheasant Dinner program. Space does not allow us to list individually all those who helped make these dinners possible for the hospitalized and disabled veterans who appreciate and deserve our help, but we wish to thank the Department and District Officers who helped spread the word,” Stone said.



PEARL HARBOR CEREMONY -- National Vice Commander Wayne Satrom of Nebraska, Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs Commissioner Larry Shellito, and Department Commander Mike Ash take a look at the World War II Memorial out the window on the fifth floor of the Veterans Service Building prior to the annual Pearl Harbor ceremony.

Sons of The American Legion

By
John W. Affolter



I hope that all in the American Legion family had a happy holiday season. We are now halfway through our year. Boy, the time flies when you’re having fun. Not much this month. I attended a SAL breakfast at North St Paul Squadron 39 (with the AL National VC & others from Department) followed by a very productive Pearl Harbor membership rally at Osseo Post 172. I attended an American Legion Family Christmas dinner at Fridley Post 303.

I am looking forward to some District mid-winters in January. The American Legion National Commander’s Tour will be Feb. 3-6; On Feb. 22nd the 67th Annual Minnesota State American Legion Family Bowling Tournament at will be at Sunset Lanes in Moorhead (runs through April 13th, 2014). I’m glad to travel where needed to represent the Sons of the American Legion. Let me know.

I encourage all Legionnaires and others eligible to be a “son” to join us. We hope to exceed 11,000 members for both 2014. We are currently as of Dec 17, 2013, at 58.73% and in 11th place nationally, 3rd in our region. The Jan. 15 goal is 60%. Send in or bring memberships to The Sweetheart Rally Saturday, February 1, 2014 at Waite Park Post 428. (Turn in is from 3-4:30 p.m.)

Legionville is my Commanders Project. We use it extensively. Use the brick paver program to contribute if you can, otherwise any contribution will be accepted.

Our Detachment (state) Spring Conference is March 14-15 moved from Waseca to Eagle Lake. Watch for details. Visit our website <http://mnsal.org> hosted by our webmaster Allen Amundson often for updated info on all SAL activities.

Please pass this on to those who may not receive the Legionnaire.

We can have fun and get the job done.



National Vice Commander Wayne Satrom of Nebraska spoke at the Pearl Harbor Rally held at the Osseo/Maple Grove Post 172.



There were smiles all around when the membership bonus checks were handed out to district representatives. From left: Department Vice Commander Denise Milton from Bagley; Carl Hendrickson, Eighth District; Dick Juhl, 10th District; Vern Massie, Sixth District; Gene Olsword, Second District.

NVC Satrom speaks at Pearl Harbor Rally

National Vice Commander Wayne Satrom was the principal speaker at the Pearl Harbor Rally held in December at the Osseo/Maple Grove Post 172.

Satrom brought greetings from National Commander Dan Dellinger

of Virginia, and complimented Minnesota on such a large turnout for a membership rally.

He said The American Legion was built on a "solid foundation."

"This is not a dying organization, and you have

proved that."

Satrom talked about supporting some of the Legion's national programs such as Operation Comfort Warriors and the National Emergency Fund.

He said it was important for Departments to keep an

eye on the VA hospitals and other facilities because of anticipated cuts in federal spending.

Satrom also called on the Legion Family to support efforts to make the desecration of the American flag successful. "We need to give Old Glory the attention it deserves."

In the membership announcements, the SAL's Sixth District was in first place with 69.28 percent.

The American Legion Auxiliary's top district was the Ninth District at 80.09 percent.

And the Legion's top membership getter was the Third District with 83.51 percent.

The Rally no longer incorporates the Cruzen awards.

Before the rally, the crowd of about 200 got a chance to see actual news-reel footage of the reporting of the attack on Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941.

The next rally will be at Waite Park on Saturday, Feb. 1.



The Minnesota American Legion Auxliary was honored for its contribution to the National Veterans Creative Art Festival held last year In Reno. Past Department President Norma Tramm, right, presented to Past Department President Raleen Tolzmann.



There were elves, like Joyce Semmell, all over the Pearl Harbor Rally at Osseo.

Membership Chart

As of Dec. 18, 2013

District	2014 Goal	Total 2013	Total 2014	Percent of Goal	Same Date '12
1	10,370	10,312	8,651	83.42	9,176
2	8,528	8,443	7,145	83.78	7,834
3	12,927	12,862	10,834	83.81	11,504
4	2,686	2,663	2,266	84.36	2,359
5	3,112	3,089	2,501	80.37	2,767
6	13,192	13,121	11,094	84.10	11,778
7	7,545	7,467	6,269	83.09	6,752
8	5,049	5,008	4,169	82.57	4,443
9	7,659	7,594	6,457	84.31	6,866
10	11,741	11,688	9,765	83.17	10,393
At-large	1,733	1,748	2,008	115.87	1,657
Totals	84,542	83,995	71,159	84.17	75,529



The Hayfield Post 330, the official Minnesota American Legion Color Guard for 2013-14, presented the colors at the Minnesota Gopher basketball game just before Christmas.

Legion Day at the Gophers basketball



Commander Mike and Teresa Ash take in the Minnesota vs. Nebraska-Omaha game. Over 100 members of the Legion Family were on hand for the game at Williams Arena.



By Al Zdon

Most people know Bud Grant as the stoic football coach who guided the Minnesota Vikings to 11 division championships and four league or conference titles in 18 years.

Some would know that Grant coached in the Canadian Football League with great success including four Grey Cups.

Going way back, there's a few who would know that Grant played both professional basketball and professional football, and before that was a nine-time letter winner at the University of Minnesota in football, baseball and basketball.

But there aren't many who know he is also a World War II veteran.

"Well, I didn't win any battle stars," Grant said with a smile.

"I graduated from Superior High School in May of 1945, and by June 1, I was at Great Lakes Naval Training Center. I joined the Navy because I didn't want to go in the draft, and who knows where I would end up. I tried to join the Marines, but they had waiting list and I didn't want to wait."

After boot camp, Grant was sent to Treasure Island Naval Station in California training as a crewmember for a Landing Ship, Infantry (LCI).

"These were the smaller LCIs. We only had troops on board. There were two crew members. It was one guy's job to steer the boat and land it. It was my job to operate the lever and drop the gate in front. Then I needed to duck."

Grant's naval career was brought short when Japan surrendered in August. For Grant, it meant heading for the



Grant was a nine-time letter winner at the University of Minnesota. He was later drafted by the Philadelphia Eagles of the NFL and the Minneapolis Lakers of the NBA and he tried out for the St. Louis Cardinals baseball team.

Bud Grant

Speaks out,
but not about football.
He talks about veterans.

University of Minnesota where he was a three-sport athlete, followed by a career that including both the U.S. Football Hall of Fame and the Canadian Football Hall of Fame.

But it isn't always football that Grant reminisces about.

"I'm 86 and one-half years old now. Most of my contemporaries are dead or infirm or incapacitated. You can't help but think that maybe you're next in line."

To illustrate his point, Grant held up a picture in his Vikings' Winter Park office showing the 1948 Gopher football team posing in front of an aircraft heading for an away game with Nebraska. "There's 38 guys in this picture, and I remember most of them. Do you know how many are left? Five. That's it. I don't have this picture on my wall anymore because it's just too depressing to look at."

Grant says that rather than watch TV, he often thinks back on his marriage and six kids and other highlights of his life. One of things he remembers most were some of the guys he knew back then who went to war and didn't come back.

"I was playing football for Superior and we played Duluth Denfeld. There was a player on the Denfeld team, and he was one of their better players. Anyway, at banquets and all-star games and whatever, I got to know him a little bit. I remember he liked to catch steelhead on Lake Superior, and so we had that in common.

"He joined the Marines. He was all excited about getting into the Marines. You have to understand that the whole focus of your life in those days was the war. It was war bonds and scrap drives, and when you'd go to the movies, they had these newsreels. I didn't even care about the movies, I just wanted to see the newsreels about the war.

"He asked if we could exchange letters. That may sound strange these days, but that's what friends did back then. It was the only way you could communicate. And it was a way you could support somebody who was in the service.

"I got a letter from boot camp, and he said how hard it was, but that now they were toughened up and ready to go. I'd write back to him and tell him what was going on in the sports world in Duluth.

"And then he went to Tarawa. He was killed in the first wave that hit the beach.

"So I think about him. He was 19 years old, and that was as far as he ever got."

One of Grant's best friends had a brother who was in the Army. "He took me and his brother out one time to a restaurant, and it was all the chili you could eat. I must have had three or four bowls. I thought this was the greatest thing in the world, and I thought he was really a good guy.

"He went to Africa, Sicily and Italy. At Anzio, he got his leg shot off. He came home, but he was never the same. He drank too much and he died a few years later.

"So I think about him. I think about the sacrifice he made so the rest of us could go on."

When Grant played football with Philadelphia Eagles, he happened to have the locker next to Chuck Bednarik, one of the toughest men to ever play pro football.

"He was three or four years older, but he was absolutely great to me. He was a waist gunner on a B-24 during the war. Like a lot of other vets, he didn't talk about his experiences in the war very much, but now and then he'd open up. He had flown his 25 missions at one point and could go home, but he volunteered for 10 more.

"Now and then we'd go out for a beer. After about two beers he'd get a little maudlin, and after some more, he'd start crying. He'd get a pen out and start writing down all the planes he could remember that were shot down from his squadron while he was there. There were 26 planes, and he could remember every one of them. There were 11 crew members on each plane, and he could remember a lot of



Grant graduated from Superior High School in April 1945 and by June he was training at the Great Lakes Naval Training Center. He later trained on naval landing craft in preparation for the anticipated landings in Japan.

those. He said that if he wrote the names down, it would help him to never forget his friends. He'd cry for a couple of hours, but he never forgot those planes."

Grant said he asked Bednarik one time about what it was like to fly in the bombers. "He said that the first mission, he couldn't wait. He said that every mission after that, he was scared shitless. Even so, he volunteered for those extra ten missions."

Grant was close to the Bong family in Superior. "I used to go hunting with Richard Bong's younger brothers, and when he came home I got to meet him. He was a hero, and he was the first hero I'd ever known."

Bong was America's leading ace in World War II, shooting down 40 Japanese aircraft during the war. "He shot down 26 planes and they sent him home to sell war bonds and all that. He was a very quiet guy, and all that war bond stuff with the pretty girls just wasn't him. I surmise that's why he went back to the war. He was more comfortable with that environment. So he went back and shot down 14 more.

"The U.S. was just developing jet planes at that time, and they made him a test pilot. He got killed testing one of those jets.

"And so I think of him. He was 24 years old when he died. What kind of life



RICHARD BONG