

# Legionnaire



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For God and Country

January 2016

## St. Cloud town hall hears good, bad, ugly



**ST. AUGUSTA TOWN HALL** -- St. Cloud VA Director Barry Bahl talks at the Town Hall Meeting held at St. Augusta Post 621. From left are national Legion officials Roscoe Butler and Lou Celli. At right is Shawn Schloesser representing Rep. Tim Walz, D-Minn.

**By Al Zdon**

Veterans filled the Legion hall at St. Augusta for a Town Hall meeting in December, and their comments on the VA ranged from outright praise to tales of medical horror.

The meeting was staffed by The American Legion's national Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation leadership, and was chaired by Louis Celli, the national director. The Legion later met with St. Cloud VA Medical Center staff.

"The American Legion believes strongly that the VA is a system worth saving, and we've said that many times in the last ten years," Celli said. "But we need to know what's going on with the VA, and not just in Washington but here in Minnesota."

"The VA faces challenges it can't solve locally, but we can work with the VA to solve those problems in Washington."

Celli said the Legion leadership meets with the VA leadership two or three times a month to exchange ideas.

About 80 veterans came to the Town Hall, and about 25 of them testified as to their experience, particularly at the St. Cloud VA Medical Center.

The St. Cloud VA has been under scrutiny lately for several reasons, one of which was a charge that employees who voiced concerns or who tried to be whistleblowers were

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## State leaders ask McDonald to visit St. Cloud

Minnesota's congressional delegation has asked Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary Bob McDonald to come to the St. Cloud VA Medical Center to help calm tensions between employees and management.

The invitation came on the heels of an official American Legion visit to the facility in mid-December that included a town hall meeting and a briefing at the hospital.

"We urge you to visit the St. Cloud VA Health Care System as soon as possible to reassure the employees and the thousands of veterans they serve of your commitment to providing a healthy and productive workplace for which to deliver the highest quality medical care," the letter from the

delegation said.

The town hall meeting included testimony from one employee who said he quit because of the working conditions in the food service area of the hospital at St. Cloud. He alleged that whistle-blowers at the facility felt threatened.

The request for an official visit ratchets up the scrutiny of the medical facility, which in previous years had built a reputation for quality service and care.

There was no immediate reaction from McDonald as to whether he would honor the request.

The American Legion sent Louis Celli, director of

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## National Commander to visit 12 posts in Minnesota in February

National Commander Dale Barnett of Georgia will spend five days in Minnesota at the beginning of February, visiting 12 posts along the way.

Barnett was elected at the 2015 national convention in Baltimore.

The tour will begin in Forest Lake, will head north and west, and will finish up with five stops in southeastern Minnesota.

Stops along the way include: Princeton, Little Falls, Morris, Litchfield, Delano, Hutchinson, Wells, Adams, Stewartville, Preston and Winona.

Those who plan to attend are encouraged to make reservations at these stops. Contact information is on page 6 of this issue.

Minnesota Legion officials are also planning on



**NC DALE BARNETT**

"awareness walks" along the way. Barnett has been promoting these walks as a

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## Last chance to avoid dues hike

Minnesota Legionnaires who have not already renewed their membership, and new members wishing to join, have one last chance to get in under the wire and avoid the \$5 national dues increase.

Those who want to renew or join, however, need to go to their post to do so. The National organization has already updated its on-line membership system to include the \$5 increase.

Memberships done through the post, though, can still be processed without the dues increase.

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## V4V grants \$90,000 to outdoor programs

The Minnesota Veterans for Veterans Trust Fund has approved a grant of \$90,000 to support outdoor activities conducted for veterans at Camp Ripley near Little Falls and at Veterans on the Lake Resort near Ely.

The grant will provide \$30,000 a year for three years to support lodging and food for four outdoor veterans outreach programs.

For over 25 years, Camp Ripley has hosted a deer hunt, and in recent years has added a turkey hunt and a fishing event know as Trolling for the Troops. And for over 40 years Veterans on The Lake has hosted an annual veterans

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## Legion Color Guard does Gopher hoops



Waite Park Post 428, this year's official Minnesota American Legion Color Guard, presented the colors at a Gophers men's hoop game in December.

## The Great Escape

Al Sanders ran to freedom after his plane crashed in Belgium.



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# Town Hall

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threatened by management.

The medical center, in an internal investigation conducted by the VA and released in August, noted that the St. Cloud VA lost more than 25 primary care doctors in three years, sending workloads for the remaining doctors skyrocketing. The investigation also said St. Cloud ranked near the bottom in employee satisfaction.

One former employee said a change in management in her department "turned it into one of the most horrible places ever. It used to be a great place to work." She said employee complaints went unheeded and that there was a "vendetta" against people who came forward.

Medical Center Director Barry Bahl addressed the turnover in staff, and said that hiring doctors to come to St. Cloud was difficult.

"Minnesota is not like California. It's cold in the winter," Bahl said. "We also pay less than the private sector. If we simply can't hire people, what do we do?"

Bahl said the hospital complex will continue to recruit doctors, although many come and stay only a short time. "If we keep recruiting, perhaps we'll get some people who will stay."

A sample of other comments from veterans and others at the Town Hall:

— A long-time patient said he'd never had a long wait time at the St. Cloud VA Medical Center.

— Another said the government needs to increase VA funding to hire more doctors in rural areas.

— One veteran said he had been hospitalized and then released, but at home he was still very sick and so he called the hospital. He said the appointments person said to him: "Well, what do you want us to do?"

— A veteran said he talks to people in the waiting rooms all the time, and nobody has anything bad to say about St. Cloud. "If it wasn't for the VA I wouldn't be here."

— A woman veteran said she had gone to the VA because she was dropping things. She said she was sent to rehab "because they wanted to treat the symptoms first." The hospital kept giving her medication to fight the pain, but never did an MRI to find the cause. Eventually, because she was on medication, she lost her job. After many months, the hospital finally agreed to do an MRI and found a bulging disk. "If someone like me has a problem, there must be something wrong inside. You can't just take medication. This could have been resolved long before I lost my job."

— A veteran criticized the mental health providers at the St. Cloud VA and said employees at the VA had falsified his records.

— An advocate for a veteran said that he had tried to see a neurologist at the St. Cloud hospital, but they didn't have one. Instead he was referred to a private doctor in the Twin Cities. The care was good, but then the VA hired a neurologist and forced the veteran to come back to St. Cloud. A major confusion with which medicine the patient was to take then ensued.

— Another veteran criticized the wind turbine at the medical center. "I've never seen that blade turn yet."

— A woman veteran said the process to have seamless transition between the military and the VA was a failure, and that it took two years to get her records straight. She also said the VA needs to do more in alternative treatments rather than just use drugs.

— A veteran said he had hernia surgery and he was sent home that day from the hospital with an 11-inch surgery scar and nine Tylenol. He went back to the St. Cloud emergency room to see if he could get more pain relief, and had to wait 45 minutes before anybody even talked to him. He had to wait 35 more minutes to see a doctor.

— The widow of a veteran said that her husband had been diagnosed at a private hospital and was told to get an emergency MRI to look at a tumor. The VA delayed the MRI for three weeks. In the meantime, the tumor had grown greatly, and not long afterwards, her husband died. "I think there might have been options available to him if they had caught it sooner. I'm broken hearted. I think the system failed my husband."

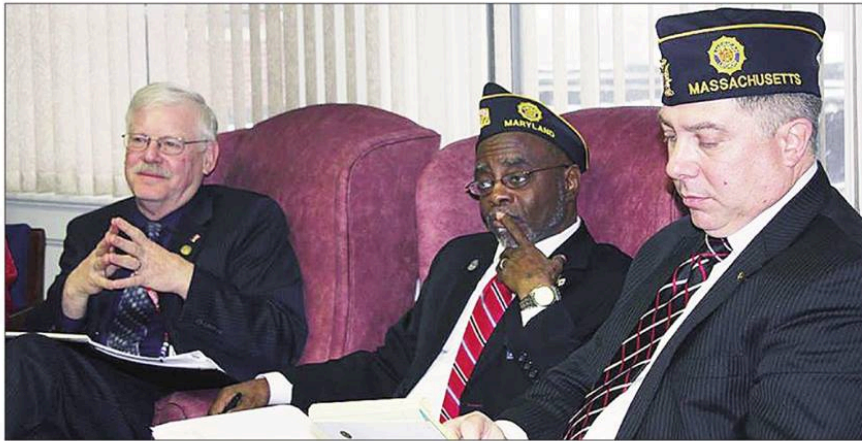
St. Cloud Chief of Staff Susan Markstrom, M.D., said the hospital had changed its policies on MRIs since that incident.

Director Bahl said that the hospital saw 650,000 patients last year. If there's even a few fractions of a percentage that have problems, we need to fix that. Things have been brought up today that we'll be looking at. We'll bird dog it until it's done. We will get better."

Barry Venable, the chief patient advocate at the hospital, said there are three full-time patient advocates besides himself. He said that every complaint is checked into, and that every veteran who complains is told of the outcome of the investigation. "We manage to resolve almost every issue, but I must say that resolving the issue and satisfaction are not totally synonymous."

In other words, the veteran may not agree with the resolution.

Veterans Choice was mentioned by several who testified. Celli said The American Legion had supported the new program that allows veterans who live a distance from a VA facility or who have a long wait time to get private care paid



**SYSTEM WORTH SAVING** -- American Legion National staff members Roscoe Butler (center), deputy director for health care, and Louis Celli, director of the Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission, listen during a briefing at the St. Cloud VA medical center the day after the town hall meeting. At left is Barry Bahl, St. Cloud VA director.

## McDonald urged to visit St. Cloud

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Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation and Roscoe Butler, deputy director for health care, from their Washington office to visit the St. Cloud facility.

The team of national and Minnesota Legion officials spent three days at the facility listening to veterans and to hospital officials about problems at the facility.

The Legion officials also visited the Minneapolis VA Medical Center.

In addition, the Legion's Operation Comfort Warriors program purchased nearly \$8,000 worth of comfort gifts for the hospital's patients. Across the U.S., OCW purchased over \$36,000 in comfort items for veterans.



**LEGION VISIT** -- Leaders of the St. Cloud VA and The American Legion gathered for a group photo during the Legion's official visit to the St. Cloud VA Medical Center in mid-December. From left: Mark Walker, deputy director for the Legion's Employment and Education; Past National Commander Dan Ludwig; Acting Minnesota Department Service Officer Jeremy Wolfsteller, Dr. Susan Markstrom, hospital chief of staff; Cheryl Thieschafer, associate director of the hospital; Patricia Aljets, chief of voluntary services; Louis Celli, American Legion director of Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation; Barry Bahl; hospital director; Department Adjutant Randy Tesdahl; Mark Aberle, hospital nurse executive; Wilson Spence, Minnesota Legion VA&R chairman; Department Commander Jim Kellogg; Roscoe Butler, national American Legion deputy director for health care.



**OCW DONATIONS TO ST. CLOUD** -- The American Legion's Operation Comfort Warriors program purchased \$7,857 worth of comfort items for patients at the St. Cloud VA Medical Center. Members of the St. Augusta Post 621, who hosted a town hall meeting for veterans during the System Worth Saving visit, shopped for items that included toiletries, food, cold weather clothing, and other personal need items. From left in front are post members Myron Schill, Jack Loch, Mitch Pelarske, Chuck Katka, Dale Olmscheid and Mike Zenzen. In the back, Department Commander Jim Kellogg shakes hands with Bruce Drake, national coordinator for OCW.

for by the VA.

"But we only supported it as a relief valve," Celli said. "We don't want it to stick around forever. We want the VA to provide that care, not contract it out."

Celli also spoke on the larger issue of privatizing the VA. "If you think privatization will help, I can promise you that out of pocket expense will increase. I can guarantee you that."

Celli said the Legion is considering entering into a contract with a major research institution to find out what VA care really costs. "How do we compare with Medicare or with private providers? It's all guesswork. It's all based on 30-year-old research."

"We want to make sure that we as veterans don't get lost in the economic shuffle that has stagnated Washington D.C."

The hearing lasted about two hours at St. Augusta Post 621. It was held as a regular meeting of the post.

## Last Chance

Continued from Page 1

The deadline for posts to send in their memberships is Jan. 13 to Department. That will allow time for Department to process the membership and send it to National to make the deadline.

Those who want to avoid the \$5 increase should get their dues into the post as soon as possible before Jan. 13 to give the post time to do its paperwork.

Membership Director Jim Lucas reminds members and potential members that the free LIT accidental death and dismemberment policy and the Family Hospital Association benefits are two great reasons to join the Legion.

# Endorsements

## Lucas endorsed for Department Vice Cdr.

Harry J. "Jim" Lucas has been endorsed by Walker Post 134 for Department Vice Commander (Sixth and Ninth Districts) for the 2016-17 Legion year.

Lucas has served his Post as Vice Commander, Membership Director, Color Guard Member and

### Norman withdraws from chaplain race

Debra Norman, who was endorsed as a candidate for Department Chaplain, has withdrawn as a candidate. She cited family issues, and thanked those who supported her candidacy.

Color Guard Commander, and Memorial Rifle Squad Commander.

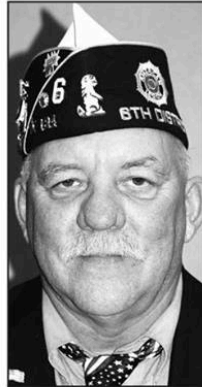
He has held numerous positions at the District level. He has served as District Commander, District Vice Commander (3 years), Membership Director (3 years), and as District Oratorical Chairman (3 years). He was awarded Vice Commander of the Year and Legionnaire of the Year.

At the Department level, Lucas is currently serving as the Department Membership Director. He has also served two terms on the Department Executive Committee and

as a member of the Heart Research Foundation Committee.

He is a member of the 40 et 8, Voiture 714; life member of the DAV (served as Junior Vice Commander, Vice Commander, Color Guard Member and Color Guard Commander); and is a life member of the National Order of Trench Rats.

Jim's military experience has included the U.S. Army, U.S. Navy, and U.S. Army Reserves as a member of the 194th Tank Regiment. His civilian life following his military service was as a truck driver. He is now retired.



JIM LUCAS

## Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

By Ronald D. Quade II



### Claims Division Pride

(Ron Quade is the director of the Minnesota American Legion Claims Division.)

Welcome to the Minnesota American Legion claims offices -- a place where veterans take care of veterans. Our Mission at MDVA is to represent Veterans and Dependents of veterans who seek benefits earned. Our divisions have an established relationship with County Veteran Service Officers and the USDVA to ensure we are appropriately served. MDVA Field Operations seeks to identify and serve veterans of all social and economic backgrounds, cultural needs and geographical locations while providing personal case development and tracking of claims.

Our success is based on dedication to customer service, education and professionalism. Our education system is a well-developed program including VA systems, statute & law, AL training and years of inclusive advocacy experience. Our representatives are the best trained advocates in the business and we pride ourselves in the responsibility of serving you. Did you know, in 2015 (MDVA fiscal) your American Legion Claims Office worked very hard to provide superior service with over 2,000 claims submitted, over 3,000 office visits to the claims divisions, over 23,000 pieces of mail processed in support of your claims? Your AL Claims Divisions assisted in an amount of \$76,000,000 plus in compensation and pension payments for Minnesota veterans and their family members.

Your American Legion Claims Division is a place you want to know and be a part of if you are not already. Please contact your local County Veteran Service Office to discuss or contact us directly at 612-970-5662. It's time to talk claims, pension or if it's been a while since we have heard from you, let's consider reopened or increases to already existing service connections. No matter the need, no matter the location, we will serve you in office or in home. Welcome to an American Legion Claims Division(s) you can be proud of, and welcome to superior service.

I am pleased to have the opportunity to write to you this month and future opportunities to provide updates and information about VA, claims and the MDVA Divisions.

## Thank you

I would like to thank everyone for their concerns, prayers, phone calls, get well cards and visits during my recent stay at the Minneapolis VA Medical Center and at home. This was a total shock to Chris and myself when I had to have triple bypass surgery. I am on my way to a full recovery and the doctors told me that I will be better than new. Our Minneapolis VA facility is one of the finest in the country and I could not have had better care anywhere else. The American Legion Family is there for you when in need.

Thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

Marland and Chris Ronning

## Legion Baseball receives \$10,000 from USA Baseball

Trustees of the Baseball America Foundation met in Nashville, Tenn., and elected to award American Legion Baseball with a grant of nearly \$10,000 this December.

Generated from Team USA programs in conjunction with USA Baseball, money from the Baseball America Foundation goes to help offset program expenses for select baseball organizations.

"We are thrilled to receive such a generous gift from the Baseball America Foundation," said Mike Buss, deputy director of The American Legion's Americanism Division. "We are excited to have additional funds available to grow our program after one of our most successful years in program history and to continue improving as an organization."

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**COMMANDER'S COLUMN**

By Jim Kellogg



Happy New Year. Hope you had a blessed Christmas. Weather sure has been mild so far. Thanks for all the kind acts and hospitality shown my wife and I. New year is time for those New Year resolutions. This year besides your personal resolutions please consider what you feel needs to be addressed by our American Legion. If you feel change is needed, a resolution is one way of making that happen. Write down what you see as the change needed and take it to your next post meeting. Your officers can help you put it in the form of a resolution. It may be a change you see needed for your post, district, department, or our national organization. It all starts at your post meeting.

Soon your post will receive forms for annual reports. Legionville and Boys State reservations will be asked for. If your post has youth interested and does not have funds it is time to have that fund raiser. If that is not possible there are some scholarship funds available. No youth should be unable to attend for lack of funds. If your post has no one eligible please consider a donation to the scholarship fund to assist others. It is also time to look at who in your Post has been working the membership program so you can submit them for proper recognition. Their extra efforts should be recognized.

Our post and district revitalizations have been productive. Thanks to all of you who have helped out. We have

several scheduled in the next couple of months. The revitalizations should be complete by April 1st to ensure an accurate count of Membership for your Delegate strength. These can be a fun and rewarding event so please help out if asked. It takes a group effort to make a revitalization successful.

It is time to make that visit to your local Army and make that connection with those serving. We need to have more involvement with these soldiers and show our support as well as tell our American Legion story. Many of these young families have someone deployed or recently returned. We can relate to their situations and help them through tough times. As we begin planning our events for this coming year we need to include these families and plan events their entire families can be part of. These soldiers and their families our are future. We need to include them in any events we have throughout the coming year, or plan a new event they can be part of.

District Mid Winters are here the next couple months. Please make an effort to attend. This is where information on all of our programs is heard. Share this information with fellow Members to help them become better informed of all that we do. Invite your local media to attend these and other Post activities and share the information in your local community. If we don't tell our story, no one will do it for us.

When you look at marketing, brand awareness is critical to success. Wear your American Legion Family Logo every chance you get. When you have read this Legionnaire take it along to your next appointment for whatever it might be and leave it there in the waiting area to share with others. You can do the same with your post and district newsletters. It is a simple way to spread the word. Membership is the life blood of our organization and you can help make a difference. When you have completed your annual consolidated post report share the information with your local media. Put up a poster in your post home or meeting place so others can see all the good we do and the impact we have in our communities.

A great year starts with a great beginning. I am hoping you all have a great year. May God Bless and safe travels to all.

**Chaplain's Corner**

By Richard Wog



Happy New Year.

The holidays are behind us. The gifts have been passed to love ones. It was a very busy time for all and also stressful for others. We know there are those who have no one to share a gift or a warm meal with even though there are a lot of charities, churches and homeless shelters that open their doors to homeless and take care of the shut-ins.

God bless those who take the time to help those in need. As you search the Bible one will find that many verses in the Bible cover the homeless and the poor. I picked Proverbs 22:2, "Rich and poor have this in common; the Lord is the maker of them all." Also, Matthew 25:40, "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me."

The American Legion leads the way in taking care of those in need. It is a very important part of the four pillars. We watch out for the veterans and their families. As each of you have served your country in the military, you are still serving as a member of The American Legion.

I have given a lot of thought about what has been a blessing in my life, as I am sure you have. I feel so lucky to have the family that God gave me.

We bring our loved ones into this world and are blessed to watch them grow into adults and think, "I did good", but I did not do this alone so we pray to keep our children safe from harm and that they will live a Godly life. We never know what the future holds for anyone.

The year 2015 is now past, and we are looking forward to another year of our life. However, we must look back on all the events that have taken place in our life and in our world; what is taking place around us.

We are still at war and it seems our country, the United States of America, are still the peacekeepers in this world. We pray every day for peace, but there are those who will not or cannot accept peace. How can this happen?

I pray for the refugees that have had to leave their homeland to seek a safe haven in another part of the country or the world and are expected to learn the customs of a foreign place. It is because of war that this is happening. When our forefathers came to America it was to find a better life. It is the same for those who are trying to get into our country now.

I have seen rioting take place in other countries and I think, there must be a better way to solve the problem and now this type of behavior is happening in our own country. There is rioting and destruction of property... Why?

People are using the first amendment of the Constitution of the United States, which gives freedom of speech to everyone, for bad behavior. I did not think that it meant it was okay to riot and burn the flag of the United States, or that we should take the name of God out of things such as the pledge of allegiance.

As we, the family of The American Legion, start the new year of 2016, let us work for what we stand for. For God and Country.

"You can't beat a man who never gives up." - Babe Ruth

**Editorial**

**Don't mess with history**

The great state of Minnesota should leave the historic artwork in the Capitol alone.

It would be wrong and shallow to apply today's political correctness to the display of artwork that was created at a certain time for a certain place.

Anyone who has driven past the Capitol in recent months will see that it's undergoing an extensive rehabilitation. This necessary work has caused some in our government process to say this is a good time to fool around with the interior artwork. A decision will be made in January on whether to keep the paintings on display as they are, or to move them to some hidden place where they will no longer offend those who wish to be offended.

And make no mistake, this effort to cleanse the Capitol of offensive art is very strong and has gathered some steam in a series of hearings and the posting of a survey for citizens to voice their opinion.

To be sure, if an artist was hired today to portray various epochal moments in Minnesota's history, it would look much different than what is there now. Much greater effort would be made to portray the influence of women and to correctly capture the sense of our native American culture.

But this is 2015, not 1905. What is on the walls of the Capitol is in itself a historic statement. It displays who we were, what we thought, and how we saw things when the Capitol was created by architect Cass Gilbert.

We should no more be messing with the artwork than we would with Gilbert's soaring arches and triumphal dome. The Capitol is Minnesota's most beautiful building, and the artwork is part of its soul.

No, Father Hennepin probably did not hold up his cross while naming St. Anthony Falls while obeseant Dakota in incorrect dress huddled at his feet. But the painting does capture other values and ideals of our pioneer forefathers and foremothers that are historically important.

We're sure you could go to the Sistine Chapel and find many Biblical inaccuracies or improper dress among the figures Michelangelo created. Yet we haven't heard anybody lately talking about moving them to another building and replacing them with more accurate versions.

It seems that part of the argument for the proponents of bowdlerizing the Capitol artwork is that the new generation is too stupid to realize that the paintings and murals are period pieces, reflecting that time and not our time. We reject that.

Minnesotans of all gender, cultural and racial backgrounds are smart enough to figure that out.

Leave the artwork alone. It is as much a part of that building as the rotunda or the legislative chambers. It was the best they could do in 1905, and some of it is of world class standards.

Don't impose our transitory view of the world on a monument to another time - a monument that continues to inform us with its ideals and breathtaking scope.

**American Legion Riders**

By Scuffy Paulson  
State President



Greetings brothers and sisters, Hopefully Santa brought everyone some chrome for the bikes and the in-laws didn't drive you nuts this holiday season. Every morning I look at my baby and patiently await my appointments with my wind therapist.

The MNALR will meet on Feb. 16 at the Sweetheart Rally at Legionville 1 p.m. in Brainerd. Please contact your district reps for any issues you would like the MNALR to address.

We have a booth reserved at the Donnie Smith Bike show at the St. Paul River center April 2nd and 3rd. Come on down and enjoy all the bikes and cars. Also a great spot to find "that" part you can never seem to locate in the swap meet area. We will have a sign up sheet at Legionville as well as on our Facebook page (American Legion Riders-Minnesota) if you would like to work at the booth and rep-

resent your chapter/district. The Legacy run committee is working hard on setting up meetings for our 2016 run. Questions about the run can be directed to Sully (10th district rep). His contact info is on our MNALR.ORG webpage.

Got to give a shout out to all the new ALR members and chapters that have started in the past few months, WELCOME aboard! Last but not least don't forget to attend your local Legion, SAL and Auxiliary meetings. See ya down the road.



State ALR Director Scuffy Paulson and sons Coltin and Cody.

**The Minnesota Legionnaire**

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Al Zdon, Editor

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# What's Happening

## Legionville Ice Fishing/Rally

In conjunction with the Sweetheart Rally at Legionville on Saturday, Feb. 6, there will be an ice fishing contest and other family activities.

The contest will go from noon to 2 p.m. on Legionville Bay, North Long Lake, north of Brainerd, the site of Legionville. If weather does not permit, the contest will be rescheduled. Entry fee is \$20 per hole and 125 holes will be drilled. Contestants will have a two-hole maximum, one pole per hole. For more information, or to get a registration blank, go to the Department website: [mnlegion.org](http://mnlegion.org).

There will be fun for all ages with a bean bag toss and minnow races at the education center.

The rally at the Legionville education center will have membership turn-in from noon-3 p.m. The chili cook-off will be from 3 to 4 along with the results of the fishing contest, and the program will start at 4 p.m. There will be no tickets for the meal, but a free will collection will be made and all proceeds will go to Legionville.

There will be dancing after the program with Wayne and the Boys.

## Free Legal Clinic

The Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans will be offering a drop-in free legal clinic for veterans. The clinic covers housing, employment, benefits, expungement, wills, debt collection, family law including child support. The clinic will be held on Jan. 12, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., Minneapolis VA Medical Center, Flag Atrium Balcony Room 2S114.

## Agent Orange Town Hall

Vietnam Veterans of America, Chapter 470, is holding a town hall meeting at the Anoka American Legion Post 102

on Saturday, Jan. 23, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. The meeting will inform veterans about Agent Orange and its effect on our children and grandchildren. There will be a speaker.

## Plane on Display

Zimmerman Post 560 will be displaying a model plane built by Ron Donway of Princeton, and then refinished by post members. The model is of the B-25 Mitchell Bomber, a World War II aircraft. The wingspan of the plane is 70 inches. The model is on display in the post's club area.

## Veterans Hiring Expo

The Minnesota Wild and a host of other organizations are sponsoring a Minneapolis/St. Paul Hiring Expo for veterans on Tuesday, Feb. 9, from 9:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. The expo will be for service members, veterans, and military spouses and will be held at Excel Energy Center in St. Paul, the home of the Wild.

An employment workshop will be held from 9:30 to 11 a.m. at which point the hiring fair will start.

Job seekers can pre-register by going to [www.event.com/d/vfkg9/4W](http://www.event.com/d/vfkg9/4W). Resumes can be uploaded. For other information go to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation website: [www.uschamberfoundation.org/hiring-our-heroes/faq](http://www.uschamberfoundation.org/hiring-our-heroes/faq).

## LGBTQ Support Group

LGBTQ veterans are invited to join a veterans support group that will meet Thursdays from 6:30 to 8 p.m. at the Center for Changing Lives, 2400 Park Avenue, Minneapolis. There is no cost and it is veteran-led. Topics will include stigmas, stress, resource information and humor and coping.

## National Convention Plans

The American Legion National Convention to be held in Cincinnati in late August has announced some of its programming. The Memorial Service will be held starting at 11 a.m. on Sunday, Aug. 28. The parade will be held later that day.

The National Commander's Banquet on Tuesday, Aug. 30, will feature Larry Gatlin and the Gatlin Brothers.

## Round Tables

The military history round tables in Minnesota have announced their schedules for January:

The St. Croix Valley Civil War Roundtable will feature "American-British Diplomatic Relations during the Civil War" with speaker Doug Johnson. The dinner meeting will be held at the Lowell Inn in Stillwater on Jan. 25. For more information, call Steve at 715-386-1268.

The Rochester Veterans Roundtable will feature "A Bridge Too Far, Operation Market Garden" with veterans Don Monson, Ray Nagel, Paul Pearson and Jim Carroll. It will be held on Monday, Jan. 11, at 7 p.m. at the Autumn Ridge Church in Rochester with a \$5 donation.

The World War II History Round Table at the Fort Snelling Visitor Center will be "Why Stalin's Soldiers Fought" featuring Russian veterans from the German front.

The program will be on Thursday, Jan. 14, at 7 p.m. with a \$5 donation. It will be preceded by a pre-meeting with a veterans panel at 6 p.m.

A change in the World War II Round Table schedule was announced. The "OSS Maritime Units - The First SEALs," originally scheduled for October, will now be held on April 28 with author Pat O'Donnell.

## Taps

### Melter, Bernard Russell "Bernie,"

77, Marine veteran of the Vietnam War, died Nov. 29, 2015. He served 21 years retiring as a gunnery sergeant. He served at Chu Lai with the 11th Marines, and later at Da Nang with Squadron MAG-15. Melter served as commissioner of Veterans Affairs in Minnesota from 1990 to 2001. He was a National American Legion Distinguished Guests Committee vice chairman from 1995 to 2001. He was a past commander of Cannon Falls Post 142.

**Nelson, Kenneth Merle,** 74, Navy veteran of the Vietnam War, died Nov. 26, 2015. He was First District Adjutant from 1993-94, First District Commander from 1995-96, and Department Vice Commander from 2004-05. He was a member of ANAVICUS and the 40/8. He was a past commander of Glenville Post 264.

**Gillund, Edgar,** 91, Navy veteran of World War II and the Korean War, died Nov. 20, 2015. He served as Seventh District Commander from 1995-96. He was a member of Marshall Post 113.

**Molitor, C.J. "Cy,"** 84, Air Force veteran of the Korean War, died Dec. 21, 2015. He had a 21-year career in the military, serving in Japan, Korea, Turkey and Vietnam. He was a member of the color guard and a past commander of Marshall Post 113. He was a counselor at Boys State for many years, and later was the program's historian, assembling several large scrapbooks.

**Skarsten, LaVerne Merlin,** 83, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Dec. 11, 2015. He was a member of Benson Post 62.

**Kupitz, Myrle L.,** 88, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Nov. 21, 2015. He was a member of Staples Post 70.

**Vogt, Albert B.,** 90, Army veteran of World War II, died Dec. 14, 2015. He was a member of Sauk Rapids Post 254.

**Schultz, Gerald F.,** 87, National Guard veteran of the Korean War, died Nov. 21, 2015. He was a member of Ashby Post 357.

**Brockopp, Gerald Harvey,** 83, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Nov. 22, 2015. He was a sergeant in the quarter master crew in Korea. He was a member of Alexandria Post 87.

**Johnson, Ronald N., Sr.,** 74, Navy veteran of the Vietnam War, died Nov. 24, 2015. He served aboard the USS Henderson in the boiler room. He was a member of Alexandria Post 87.

**Brandt, Glenn M.,** 92, Navy veteran of World War II, died Dec. 14, 2015. He was a member of Austin Post 91.

**Bleick, Bert,** 78, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Dec. 7, 2015. He was in the National Guard for eight years. He was a member of Fairfax Post 205.

**Schmidt, Stuart Edward,** 89, Navy veteran of World War II, died Dec. 15, 2015. He was a member of Red Wing Post 54.

**Gottschalk, Elmer Hugo,** 92, Army veteran of World War II, died Dec. 12, 2015. He was a member of Sauk

Rapids Post 254.

**Gerardy, Buddy,** 91, Army veteran of World War II, died Dec. 4, 2015. He served in the Pacific. He was a member of Fairfax Post 205.

**Meyer, Glen,** 83, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Dec. 2, 2015. He was a corporal in the artillery stationed in Maryland. He was a member of Marshall Post 113.

**Loshman, Gary B.,** 85, Navy veteran of the Korean War, died Dec. 8, 2015. He was in the Seabee Reserves. He was a member of Albert Lea Post 56.

**Hatleli, Clayton L.,** 80, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Nov. 11, 2015. He was a member of Albert Lea Post 56.

**Westendorf, Raymond A.,** 92, Army veteran of World War II, died Nov. 25, 2015. He served in the Pacific. He was a member of Albert Lea Post 56.

**Nelson, Lauris "Lolly,"** C., 95, Marine Corps and Merchant Marine veteran of World War II, died Dec. 4, 2015. He was a member of Albert Lea Post 56.

**Krieg, Kenneth R.,** 70, Navy veteran of the Vietnam War, died Nov. 17, 2015. He was a member of Albert Lea Post 56.

**Ketterling, Dr. Clarence "Kett,"** 97, Army veteran of World War II, died Dec. 8, 2015. He was a member of Morris Post 29.

**Harris, William F.,** 64, Army veteran of the Vietnam War, died Dec. 1, 2015. He served in Europe. He was a member of Austin Post 91.

**Hayes, Everett E.,** 87, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Dec. 1, 2015. He was a member of Austin Post 91.

**Handke, Norraine O.,** 93, Navy veteran of World War II, died Dec. 6, 2015. She was a member of Austin SPAM Post 570.

**Berger, Robert R.,** 69, Army National Guard veteran of the Vietnam War, died Nov. 20, 2015. He served in Co. B of the 136th Infantry. He was a member of Roseau Post 24.

**Evjen, Virgil Duane,** 78, Navy veteran of the Vietnam War, died Nov. 29, 2015. He was a member of Hayfield Post 330.

**Brandt, Hilbert C.,** 95, Navy veteran of World War II, died Nov. 27, 2015. He served in the Pacific on five different destroyers attaining the rate of signalman first class. He was a member of Trimont Post 373.

**Lair, Mildred Oretta,** 95, Navy veteran of World War II, died Nov. 26, 2015. She was a WAVE and served at Great Lakes in Illinois. She was a member of Kenyon Post 78, and also belonged to the Auxiliary.

**Oslin, Howard,** 89, Navy veteran of World War II, died Nov. 22, 2015. He served as rifle instructor. He was a member of Mora Post 201.

**Elizondo, Ernesto Joseph,** 89, Navy veteran of World War II, died Nov. 12, 2015. He was a member of Pine City Post 51.

**Soderbeck, Roger Royal,** 83, Air Force veteran of the Korean War, died Nov. 13, 2015. He was a member of Pine City Post 51.

**Beihoffer, Warren E.,** 93, Navy veteran of World War II, died Nov. 18, 2015. He was a member of Windom Post

206.

**Feala, Thomas R.,** 81, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Nov. 23, 2015. He was a member of Maple Lake Post 131.

**Loso, Michael J.,** 92, Navy veteran of World War II, died Nov. 20, 2015. He was a member of St. Joseph Post 328.

**Rakotz, Elmer J.,** 77, Army veteran of the Vietnam War, died Nov. 21, 2015. He was a member of St. Joseph Post 328.

**Schroeder, Richard,** 85, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Nov. 2, 2015. He was an Army interpreter in Korea. He was a member of St. Joseph Post 328.

**Lindell, Sherlock J.,** 82, Marine Corps veteran of the Korean War, died Nov. 19, 2015. He was a member of Isanti Post 290.

**Woolery, Charles M.,** 87, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Dec. 11, 2015. He was a past commander and member of the color guard at Marietta Post 156.

**Lorentz, Mark Theodore,** 92, Army veteran of World War II, died Dec. 11, 2015. He was in the counterintelligence corps and served in Germany as a special investigator. He was a member of Dent Post 148.

**Erickson, Donald J.,** 82, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Dec. 13, 2015. He was a member of Granite Falls Post 69.

**Miller, Alton,** 93, Army veteran of World War II, died Dec. 11, 2015. He served in France. He was a member of New London Post 537.

**Schlehaas, Albertus,** 83, Air Force veteran of the Korean War, died Dec. 16, 2015. He was a member of Edgerton Post 42.

**Gauer, Glen W.,** 82, Marine Corps veteran of the Korean War and Air Force veteran of the Vietnam War, died Nov. 20, 2015. He was a member of Willmar Post 167.

**Seybert, Ralph D.,** 87, Army veteran of World War II, died Nov. 27, 2015. He was a member of Willmar Post 167.

**Swenson, Morris L.,** 90, Army veteran of World War II, died Nov. 28, 2015. He was a member and past commander of Willmar Post 167.

**Strom, Gordon W.,** 92, Army veteran of World War II, died Dec. 9, 2015. He was a member of Willmar Post 167.

**Lindsoe, Rial M.,** 93, Army veteran of World War II, died Dec. 12, 2015. He was a member of Willmar Post 167.

**Morris, Keith L.,** 83, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Dec. 20, 2015. He was a member of Willmar Post 167.

**Loken, Wilbur "Stubby,"** 86, Air Force veteran of the Korean War, died Dec. 7, 2015. He had a 22-year career and retired as a master sergeant. He worked at many bases including Area 51. He was a member of Houston Post 423.

## Correction

McManus, Dr. John T., 83, Army veteran of the Vietnam War, died Oct. 20, 2015. He was a radiologist in Vietnam, and he assisted in setting up the first evacuation hospital. He was a member of Hackensack Post 202.

## Sons of The American Legion

By  
Gene Olsword



The year 2015 was good to me with good health and many new friends. Just a quick recap of my year as it unfolded for me. As the Second District Commander for the SALs, I had a very good year with starting two new SAL squadrons, reactivating a squadron in my district and ending the membership year with a nice increase in membership with a final percentage of over 105%, a goal I had set very high at the beginning of my term as Commander.

It was the great support of my membership team that made this all happen so my thanks has to go out to them. In June at Legionville we held our SAL Convention where I was elected the Detachment Commander for the Sons of The American Legion.

Again, I had set goals and again they are high goals but very attainable. In August, Vickie and I attended the National Convention in Baltimore, which was a very rewarding, knowledgeable, and a great experience for me. The history stories of the city were many and too numerous to mention here.

In October, it was a trip to National Headquarters in Indianapolis for training as a new Detachment Commander. From these sessions, I brought back many new ideas just from listening to others. I have attended many dinners throughout the state and, yes, the pounds are starting to show.

I want to say thank you to all the posts and squadrons for the invitations I have received so far.

Membership is a very important part in the success of a Detachment and, as I stated above, I have set a high but very attainable goal.

To have success, you have to have good communication so in October, I set up and had our first Detachment Conference Call which has worked very well with the 3 calls we have had so far. From these calls, questions have been asked and answered and ideas shared. I set this Conference Call primarily for the Detachment Membership team but as I see it now, I am going to open it up to ALL squadron commanders in hopes it will help these squadrons in some form.

If there are any squadron commanders interested in attending, contact me at manofgrs@hotmail.com and I will give you the needed phone numbers.

In this 2016 Membership Year, two new squadrons have been started and I hear some may be in the making which strengthens our Detachment membership but more importantly, greatly strengthens the Legion posts they are attached to.

All American Legion posts should consider starting one. It only takes 10 qualified male individuals to start a squadron in a post. Let us know if we can help you start one. Detachment is meeting all of Nationals goals ahead of schedule. January 20th is Nationals Goal of 60% and as of the Membership Report of December 16th, the Detachment of Minnesota is at 63.74% which is just awesome. I am so proud of the work everyone is doing.

## National Commander to visit Minnesota

Continued from Page 1  
way to raise awareness of the Legion's impact on a community and the state, and he has held 15 walks thus far across the country.

The commander will be accompanied on his tour by his aide, Dewey Moss, Department Commander Jim Kellogg, Department Adjutant Randy Tesdahl and Membership Director Jim Lucas.

There will be a social hour starting at 5 p.m. before each dinner meeting along the way.

Barnett is a graduate of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point and served as an Army infantry officer from 1974-96, retiring as a lieutenant colonel.

He was raised in central Indiana and attended Hoosier Boys State.

After his military career, Barnett taught high school social studies and coached sports teams.

He has degrees from West Point, Boston University and the Command and General Staff College in Kansas.

He and his wife, Donna, live in Douglasville, Ga., and have five children and four grandchildren.

The tour will feature three stops per day.

At each stop, photos with the National Commander will be taken with posts that are at goal or all time high. Those pictures will then appear in the Minnesota Legionnaire.

Commander Barnett's project this year is to raise money for the National Emergency Fund. Several years ago when there was flooding in the Red River Valley and tornadoes in southern Minnesota, hundreds of Legion members and some posts were helped by grants from the fund.



Those attending should make reservations with the post.

### 2016 National Commander's Tour

Post	Event	Day	Contact:
Forest Lake	8 a.m. breakfast	Feb. 1	651-464-2600, Post
Princeton	noon lunch	Feb. 1	763-389-7814, Tess
Little Falls	6 p.m. dinner	Feb. 1	320-632-5944, Post
Morris	8 a.m. breakfast	Feb. 2	320-589-3495, Cal
Litchfield	noon lunch	Feb. 2	320-693-2350, Post
Delano	6 p.m. dinner	Feb. 2	763-972-2969, Post
Hutchinson	8 a.m. breakfast	Feb. 3	320-587-5856, Rogier
Wells	noon lunch	Feb. 3	507-381-3559, Donnette
Adams	6 p.m. dinner	Feb. 3	507-438-8228, Lynn
Stewartville	8 a.m. breakfast	Feb. 4	507-533-9281, Leave message
Preston	noon lunch	Feb. 4	507-272-5966, John
Winona	6 p.m. dinner	Feb. 4	507-452-2827, Sam

## V4V grants \$90,000 over three years to outdoor programs

Continued from Page 1

fishing event each May.

Over the years, the state's Veterans Service Organizations were the mainstay in funding these events through donations from the posts and chapters around the state. The veterans organizations also have provided the volunteer base to make these events possible.

Veteran participants are chosen by completing an application followed by a blind drawing system conducted by a third party. Those with disabilities and limitations are given priority.

"We make it a point to encourage turnover in attendees and are always looking for new ways to get the word and applications out to veterans that have not yet been a part of one of the events," said Dennis Erie, the State Veterans Outdoor Program coordinator chosen by the four VSOs to run, oversee, and assist with the program.

Each event can provide outdoor opportunities for those that may not normally get the chance to get out and hunt or fish like they used to.

"These events are growing in interest, and more and more members of our organizations as well as community leaders are wanting to become involved and volunteer to help," said Tate Doom, State Adjutant of the VFW.

The four VSOs, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, The American Legion, The Disabled American Veterans and the Military Order of the Purple Heart, along with volunteers from other veterans groups and civic organizations, have reached out to the new generation of veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan. The VSOs try to team a younger veteran with an older veteran at these events and give them opportunities to bridge the generation gap while spending time together in the field or on the water.

"It's great to see a younger veteran and an older veteran together in the boat, and it isn't long before they're sharing like experiences they've had in the military even though they're generations apart," said Stephen "Butch" Whitehead, State Adjutant of the DAV.

Randy Tesdahl, State Adjutant of The American Legion, said, "These are fairly large scale events that we put on, and expenses can range from \$3-12,000 per event. We provide the meal prep and service, lodging and giveaway items such as T shirts and caps.

"We try to coordinate a program that includes noted outdoors celebs from Minnesota such as Bud Grant, Al Lindner, Ron Schara and Dave Genz," Tesdahl said. "We have been filmed and highlighted on various outdoors television programs and radio shows. We are showing our younger new generation veterans that being a member of a VSO is more than just going to meetings and sitting in a bar. We are doing things for our fellow veterans."

Dean Ascheman, this year's Chairman of V4V, said, "We are proud to be a part of these events. In past years, V4V has been able to help with smaller grants that have provided for equipment needs such as hunting blinds for the turkey and deer hunts. This grant will be used primarily for the lodging and food for the four events over the next three years and lend to the sustainability into the future for Minnesota veterans.

"Camp Ripley and the Veterans on the Lake have over the years always been a very integral part of these events," Tesdahl said.

Col. Scott St Sauver, Camp Ripley Garrison Commander, said, "These events are a great way to share the environmental diversity at Camp Ripley with our Minnesota veterans. When I visit with recently deployed

soldiers, the conversations always revolve around deer camp, the fishing opener, and being outdoors back home in Minnesota.

"These events have grown exponentially in recent years and it is of critical importance the new generation of veterans experience the work of the VSOs and groups like V4V."

Minnesota Veterans 4 Veterans Trust Fund (V4V) is a Minnesota 501 (c) 19 Trust created by the sale of Big Island on Lake Minnetonka to the city of Orono. The interest from that fund provides grants for Minnesota veterans projects. Big Island Veterans Camp on Lake Minnetonka was at one time a veteran's get-away owned by the Big Island Board of Governors who, by statute, were appointed to this board by the four major Veteran Service Organizations (VSOs) of Minnesota. The American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Disabled American Veterans and The Military Order of the Purple Heart.

In 2005 The Island was purchased by the City of Orono for \$5.8M and, again as required by the same statute, a new organization (V4V) was formed and tasked with leadership, ownership and stewardship / oversight of the monies received through the sale of the Big Island Veterans Camp.

The funds from the sale are invested with Wells Fargo and the grant process is also managed by Wells Fargo. The Minnesota Veterans 4 Veterans Trust Fund (V4V) has the fund's oversight and responsibility for making grants. Again, as required by statute, the board is comprised of two appointed members from each of the four major VSOs with final grant approving authority in the hands of the Minnesota Commissioner of Veterans Affairs.

Since the first grant in January of 2007, V4V has provided over \$1.5M in grants to Minnesota organizations providing service to veterans and still maintains \$5.4M of the original trust.

# Rally at Faribault

During World War II, thousands of resistance fighters took up arms across France and other captured nations.

How did they get their weapons, explosives, radios and other materiel needed to fight a war against the Nazi occupiers? They got it from the Carpetbaggers.

Operation Carpetbagger started at the beginning of 1944, and flew thousands of missions over Europe to help the resistance.

Bob Olson of St. Paul was at the Pearl Harbor Rally in Faribault to tell about his experience as a gunner aboard a B-24 bomber that was part of the operation. "I couldn't tell the story for 40 years because we were sworn to secrecy."

Olson brought a film with him that showed the work of the Office of Strategic Services operation. The OSS was America's spy operation during the war.

"We had to take off at night. The airfield had a line of trees at the end of the runway. By the end of the war, there was a 'U' shape cut into the trees where they had been hit by propellers and landing gear."

The planes had a strict altitude they could fly at, and if they varied at all from that altitude, they were in danger of being shot down by Allied gunners before they even left England.

Once on their way over Europe, they would do several doglegs to throw off any pursuit or indication of where they were headed. They would fly at 28,000 feet.

"If you got caught by a searchlight, it was bright enough in the plane to read a newspaper." Olson's bomber was once caught by three searchlights over Dresden and the pilot had to make a 10,000 foot crash dive. "You can't believe the pain in my ears."

After dropping their precious cargo, and sometimes a spy, the planes would head home and arrive over the English Channel at dawn. "We would see the White Cliffs of Dover and they looked pretty good to us."

Back at the base, the crew was entitled to one four-inch shot of cognac. "I was very young and not used to drinking, but I learned." The crews were also interrogated twice about the mission.

"We would only fly every four or five days because the stress was so great and because we were in the air for so long."

Part of their training was to look like Europeans if they had to bail out. "We had to learn how to eat and smoke like

Europeans."

Olson's daughter, Jenny, read a poem to the 160 or so at the rally about her dad's service to the country.

The membership rally featured good reports from the Legion Family.

The SAL reported that it's at 60.18 percent of goal, with the Second District leading the way at 71.91 percent. The Auxiliary said it was at 61.24 percent or fifth in the nation. The Ninth District is leading the way at 67.47 percent.

The Legion was led by the First District at 84.24 percent at the rally with the Department now at 84.31 percent.

It was the 40th anniversary of the Pearl Harbor Rally, and Past Department Commander Harlan Buck was present. He was also present at the first Pearl Harbor Rally.

The Buffalo Post announced a \$10,000 donation to Commander Jim Kellogg's project, the Brain Science Foundation.



The featured speaker for the evening was Bob Olson of St. Paul who talked about his World War II experiences as a "carpetbagger."



Commander Jim Kellogg and President Sandy Fredrickson unwrapped gifts at the Pearl Harbor Rally.

Photos by Dennis DeLong

## Membership Chart As of Dec. 16, 2015

District	2016 Goal	Total 2015	Total 2016	Percent of Goal	Same Date '14
1	9,627	9,574	8,318	86.40	8,297
2	7,779	7,705	6,629	85.22	6,847
3	12,165	12,116	10,574	86.92	10,400
4	2,561	2,560	2,219	86.65	2,112
5	2,829	2,788	2,331	82.43	2,380
6	12,485	12,415	10,686	85.59	10,788
7	6,997	6,926	5,959	81.23	6,029
8	4,630	4,593	3,763	76.18	3,898
9	7,332	7,172	6,223	86.05	6,348
10	10,964	10,917	9,284	84.68	9,352
At-large	3,734	2,661	2,305	61.73	2,181
<b>Totals</b>	<b>81,000</b>	<b>79,427</b>	<b>68,289</b>	<b>84.31</b>	<b>66,632</b>

# Pearl Harbor Observance

Richard Thill was an eyewitness to the beginning of World War II for America.

Thill, 92, who was the featured speaker at the Pearl Harbor Day Remembrance Ceremony at the Armory in the Capitol, was one of 84 Naval reservists from St. Paul who served on an old World War I destroyer, USS Ward.

Ward was guarding the entrance to Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, when the ship got word that one of the four minesweepers coming out of the harbor had spotted a periscope.

"Nobody told us about mines out there," Thill said.

The ship went to general quarters, but the periscope could not be found. Unknown to the U.S. forces, the Japanese had sent in five midget submarines to try and enter Pearl Harbor where much of the American Pacific fleet was anchored.

Thill, who was a cook on the ship, went back to making breakfast for the crew. "On a destroyer, the pancakes are never round, but they tasted just as good."

A little later, the destroyer again went to battle stations because another ship reported a conning tower in the water. A Navy PBX search plane came by and dropped smoke bombs to mark the spot.

The Ward approached the area. "We had a new skipper on board, and he'd only been there two days. But he was convinced it was some kind of sub. And away we went. At first he wanted to ram it, but then he decided he didn't want to wreck his ship."

The Ward approached the sub on its port side, and the number one gun in the bow of the destroyer fired a shot but missed. "We were only about 100 feet away, and the range finders on the guns only go down to 600 yards. We were too close. They couldn't lower the gun enough to hit it, and it went sailing over the conning tower."

Thill's battle station was as an aimer on a gun on the other side of the ship.

As the destroyer went by the conning tower, which was only about five feet by five feet, the ship's number 3 gun on the starboard side fired at the conning tower and hit it, putting a four-inch hole in either side of the structure. "We were using armor-piercing shells and so it didn't explode, it just went right through."

As the Ward went by, it began dropping depth charges. It's possible that the depth charges caused the Japanese sub to begin taking water. "They think it just filled with water

and went down."

The sub was found in 2002 by a University of Hawaii team with a submersible. The submarine showed no damage except for the holes in the conning tower. It's possible that the two-man crew was killed by the Ward's shell. The sub had drifted several miles before settling on the bottom.

Thill said the Ward reported the sinking of the sub to the headquarters, but no action was taken and no alert was sounded. The attack on Pearl Harbor by hundreds of Japanese planes happened an hour later.

"It was a Sunday, and I suppose it was all junior officers at headquarters and they wanted some evidence we had sunk a submarine. But, of course, our evidence was at the bottom of the sea."

During the attack, Ward was attacked by two Japanese bombers. "But they attacked us side by side, and our ship was so narrow that the bombs fell on either side of it."

Thill was given a standing ovation by the crowd at the armory.

The audience also heard from Department of Veterans Affairs Commissioner Larry Shellito, and the Kerkhoven-Murdock-Sunberg Marching Saints Band performed several numbers. The band has been chosen to represent Minnesota at next year's 75th commemoration of Pearl Harbor Day in Hawaii.

Gov. Mark Dayton was scheduled to speak, but was having back surgery in Rochester.

The program was put on by the MDVA, the Memorial Rifle Squad at Fort Snelling and the Pearl Harbor Survivors Association.



Tom Mullen of the Fort Snelling Memorial Rifle Squad performed "Taps" at the ceremony.



Richard Thill of St. Paul, who served aboard the USS Ward, the American ship that fired the first shot of World War II, recalled his experiences on the first Pearl Harbor Day, Dec. 7, 1941.



The Kerkhoven-Murdock-Sunberg Marching Saints Band provided the music for the Pearl Harbor observance at the Armory in St. Paul. The band has been chosen to represent Minnesota next year at Pearl Harbor during the 75th commemoration of the attack.

# The Great Escape

By Al Zdon

**B**ailling out over Belgium and badly spraining your ankle during the parachute landing was tough enough.

But Al Sanders in the next few weeks had to hide out in the countryside, get captured in Brussels because of a traitor, spend weeks starving in a jail, and escape from the clutches of the German Army on the famous "Nazi Ghost Train" before he could rejoin the Army Air Corps.

Alfred M.L. Sanders was born in 1918 and grew up in Kentwood, Louisiana, a small town about 90 miles north of New Orleans. Kentwood is best known these days as the hometown of Britney Spears.

After graduating from high school, Sanders went on to Louisiana State University where he earned a track scholarship. He ran the 440 and 880 in many national meets, and ended up his career at LSU with a bachelor's degree in education. He was enrolled in the ROTC program and earned his commission before graduation.

He wanted to be a science teacher, but a funny thing happened on his way to a school career. World War II started.

"I was flying a Piper Cub for a half hour on December 7, 1941, and when I landed, the sheriff was waiting for me. He said, 'What are you doing flying that airplane around? Don't you know there's a war going on?'"

Sanders didn't know, but soon he was at the recruiting office trying to get into the Army Air Corps. "I had a terrible time getting into the service. When I took the physical, I was two pounds below the minimum. I told the doctor I'd be back. I went and got a half dozen bananas and ate them and went back. It wasn't easy. Later, it struck me that I could just have drank a quart of water and done the same thing."

Sanders passed his physical, and later earned his wings at Blytheville, Arkansas. He was sent to Sewart Air Force Base in Smyrna, Tennessee, and learned how to fly a B-24 Liberator, a large four-engined bomber.

He did training at several other sites, including Tucson, Arizona, before getting orders to report overseas. By this time, the crew for his B-24 had been assembled and he and the crew had been issued a brand new B-24 bomber.

Sanders had the nose painted with the LSU Tiger, and the nickname was "Mike, the spirit of LSU." The crew flew the plane across the south Atlantic to Dakar and after stops at seven bases, wound up in Sudbury, England, just northeast of London, in April 1944. They were assigned to the 486th Bombardment Group (Heavy).

The crew had flown four missions prior to May 28, 1944. The bomb drops over German targets had been scary, but uneventful.

On that day, Sanders and the rest were awakened at 5 a.m. "You have time to use the bathroom, shave and get ready and then head for the mess hall." After that, it's a trip to the supply room to get whatever gear a crewmember needs for the flight. For Sanders, it would be a parachute. For the navigator, bombardier and radio operator, each had a "kit" to pick up for that day.

In the ready room, an officer would be standing by the side of a large curtain as the pilots filed in and took their seats. "Then he'd say, 'Ready, boys?'" and he'd pull the cur-

tain. And we'd say, 'Oh, my God, we're going to Berlin.'"

Behind the curtain was a huge map of that day's mission. The flight would be to north central Germany to a synthetic oil refinery near Leipzig, a city southwest of Berlin. It would be an eight-hour flight.

It was still dark when the crew was transported by truck to the Spirit of LSU. There, each would get ready for the mission according to their role on the plane. There were 10 young men on the crew.

The take-off that day was delayed one hour until 10 a.m. Sanders' plane taxied out to the runway. "We'd be sitting there with the brakes on and the engines running full. The plane was heavy, and we'd have to get it off the ground before we got to that farmer's barn at the end of the runway."

After takeoff that day, it got a little dicey for a time. "We had sweet cream on our windshield (fog) and we couldn't see anything. But you just did what you were supposed to do, and when we broke out on top of the fog we were almost in formation."

Once in the air, there would be 36 bombers in the formation, split up into groups of three. Sanders' position was just to the right of the lead bomber, which had special lights in its wings and tail, and slightly above him. "They wanted us to fly wingtip to wingtip, but we probably had 10 feet in between. It was still pretty close."

Sanders's Liberator, Aircraft 682, was flown a bit higher than the lead plane so that if the leader turned right, Sanders

*Al Sanders was flying his fifth mission over Germany in a B-24 Liberator when his bomber was hit by anti-aircraft fire. Bailing out over Belgium, he finally escaped back to American lines three months later. He was aboard the famous "Ghost Train" of Brussels.*

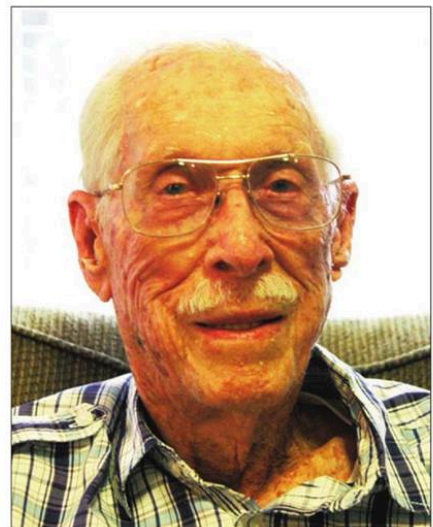


would be able to turn with him without crashing into him.

The bombers cleared the channel at about 12:45 and headed across Holland. "We never used the radio to talk to other planes in the formation, but we'd be talking all the time inside the plane on the headphones. Outside the plane, the crew called me 'sir,' but once we were underway, they



**FIRST LT. AL SANDERS**  
During World War II



**AL SANDERS**  
At home in White Bear Lake