

The Minnesota American Legion and Auxiliary

# Legionnaire



Volume 97, Number 12

For God and Country

December 2015

## Expressive writing may help some veterans with reintegration

Are you a veteran? Sit down for 20 minutes and write about resuming civilian life after your military deployment. Put your deepest thoughts into it.

And then do it three more times.

Sound simple? It is, yet this expressive writing exercise has been shown to help – not a lot, but a little bit – veterans who have had problems reintegrating or who have experienced PTSD.

The Center for Chronic Disease Outcomes Research, part of the Minneapolis Veterans Affairs Healthcare System, recently announced the results of a study of 1,300 veterans in the U.S.

Veterans who did the expressive writing exercise experi-

enced greater reductions in physical complaints, anger, and distress compared with a control group who did not write expressively. And, compared to veterans in the study who did not write at all, there were greater reductions in many areas including PTSD symptoms and reintegration.

The study dates back to 2004 when researchers at the CCDOR applied for a federal grant to study the benefits of expressive writing.

"We wanted to reach veterans no matter where they were in the help range of problems," said Dr. Nina Sayer, a clinical psychologist. "The study was aimed at veterans who have had some difficulties being back home, but who didn't want to seek access to professional care."

The idea that expressive writing can somehow help people dates back to 1986 and the work of James Pennebaker, a social psychologist.

"The premise is that keeping emotions about a difficult life event to one's self has a negative result," Sayer said.

She said the theory is similar to much current thinking in treating PTSD where veterans are encouraged to talk about their problems. "If they talk to family and friends, it opens a pathway to social support."

The study involved first getting a list from the federal government of all returning Iraq and Afghanistan veterans. With the list in hand, Sayer and her colleagues randomly

Continued on Page 7

### A Christmas Story

# A guiding light back home

By Al Zdon

Lt. Pete O'Dwyer climbed into the cockpit of his Hellcat and went through his check list.

It was Christmas day, 1943. O'Dwyer would have been content to hang around the wardroom with his fellow pilots and enjoy the holiday. But, no, it was a work day for the Navy.

An invasion in the Bismarck Archipelago was planned, and the Navy had been ordered to attack the port city of Kavieng in New Guinea to support the attack on the Japanese positions.

O'Dwyer was also unhappy to be taking off this late in the afternoon. There should be plenty of time to get back to

the aircraft carrier USS Bunker Hill before dark, but he didn't like pushing the envelope. He had only done a couple of night landings, and it was a thrill he didn't need.

"How's it going, lieutenant?" boomed a big voice next to him. It was Eddie Porinsky, his crew chief, usually known simply as "Ski." He was standing on the wing of the aircraft.

"Looks okay, Ski. Were you able to get some more air in that tire?"

"Yeah, it's all set, Lieutenant. We put a brand new tire on. This one shouldn't leak. The airplane looks to be in good shape. I gave her the once over myself."

"Thanks, Ski."  
"Too bad about you having to fly on Christmas. The Navy has no heart."

Continued on Page 2



Holiday fiction

## Legion Day at U of M Hoops December 23

American Legion Family Day at the University of Minnesota Gopher Basketball will be held Wednesday, Dec. 23.

The game will feature the Gophers vs. Milwaukee at 7 p.m. at

the historic arena.

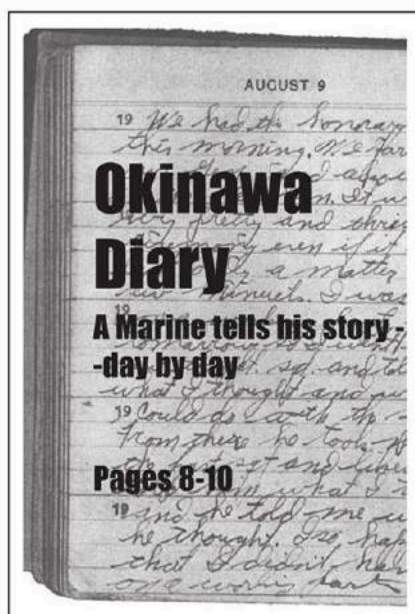
A special ticket price of \$15 has been established by the Gophers.

An American Legion color guard will present the colors at the beginning of the game.

To purchase tickets go to The American Legion website on mlegion.org and click on the Legion Day at Gopher Hoops.

When in the Gopher site to order tickets, unclick the "best available" and click on the \$15 option.

Or, ticket buyers can buy tickets from the Gophers directly by calling Steve, 612-626-1592.



## Minnesotans are picked for national appointments

Minnesotans have been appointed to several national committees and commissions, including three chairmanships and three vice chairmanships. Appointments, including those already serving on committees, include:

Chuck Kruger of Byron will serve as chairman of the Conventional Armed Forces Committee.

William Goede, Plainview, was appointed chairman of the National Guard and Reserve Forces Committee.

Mike Bredeck, Madison, was named chairman of the Committee on Youth Education.

Thomas Schottenbauer of St. Louis Park was named vice chairman of the Conventional Armed Forces Committee.

Roger K. Olson, Hutchinson, was named vice chairman of the National Convention Resolutions Assignment Committee.

Peggy Moon, St. Joseph, was named vice chairman of the Committee on Children and Youth. Moon will also serve as vice president of the American Legion Child Welfare Foundation.

Daniel Ludwig, Red Wing, will be on the Advisory Committee to the National Commander.

Marland Ronning, Maple Grove, will serve as a member of the Resolutions Subcommittee of the National Executive Committee. Ronning was also appointed a member of the

Continued on Page 7

A Christmas Story

# A guiding light back home



Continued from Page 1

"That's the way it goes. I just wish I wasn't flying this late in the day. I might miss out on the fruitcake in the ward-room."

Ski took out his rag and gave the windscreen a quick polish. "Don't worry, I'm sure they'll save you some. Have a great flight, Lieutenant. We'll see you in a few hours."

O'Dwyer completed his checklist and gazed down the long length of the flight deck. Three planes were ahead of him, and then it would be his turn. His thoughts for a moment went to his family at home. *Mom and dad would probably have a pretty good crowd over. The O'Dwyer home was usually the hub of the holidays for relatives and friends. They might be gathered in the living room right now, singing some carols. Oh, wait, he thought. What about the dateline? Was Christmas in Minnesota yesterday or would it be tomorrow? I never could figure that out.*

Now it was his turn, and he cranked the huge engine up to max power. The Hellcat was a fighter plane, designed to engage the enemy fighters and protect the bombers and torpedo planes of the Navy.

The takeoff went without a problem, and soon he was forming up with the other Hellcats. The fighters were off to the side and above, hoping to give the bombers a safe ride to Kavieng. It was 240 miles to the target, probably an hour and a half if the weather stayed good.

O'Dwyer settled back in his seat. His eyes were glued to the instruments and to the aircraft around him, but his mind was drifting back to Christmases past. It was always his favorite holiday. You could buy a tree in town, but his dad always liked to head to the woods with a sled and cut down his own tree. He let young Pete do the cutting. Mom would come out as they reached the farmhouse, and she would ooh and aah about the wonderful tree they had chosen. Once it was in its stand in the living room, it was time for hot apple cider.

The radio squawked, and brought O'Dwyer back to reality. "Red three, you might want to tighten up a little bit," said the squadron's skipper. Red three was Lt. (j.g) Marvin "Marvelous Marv" Smith of Pinecone, Arkansas, flying just to O'Dwyer's right. He was a good pilot, but he tended to stray a bit from the formation. "We're about 40 minutes out," the skipper said.

Getting closer to the target increased the chances the Jap Zeros would be looking for them, and O'Dwyer scanned the skies looking for the small specks that might be the enemy.

As the American planes advanced closer to Kavieng, there was no doubt that the enemy was aware of the attack. Some of the first planes had already reached the port city and the Japanese were sending up huge quantities of anti-aircraft fire. *Oh, great,* thought O'Dwyer as he looked into the distance at the brilliant puffs in the air. *Looks more like the Fourth of July than Christmas.*

"Get ready, gentlemen," barked the squadron skipper. "Bogies at 12 o'clock and below."

One by one the Hellcats peeled off to join the skipper in an attack on the Zeros. O'Dwyer picked out a likely target and trailed him for a bit, but was unable to finish the deal with his 50 caliber machine guns.

By this time the anti-aircraft fire was all around the American attack, and the explosive puffs were way too close. *Steady, steady,* O'Dwyer thought. He got on the tail of another enemy plane and let loose short bursts from his guns, and he thought he saw some splinters fly off the Zero. He was concentrating so hard, that the radio squawk surprised him. "Red two, Red two, you've got company coming at you from the right. Three o'clock. Break off, break off."

O'Dwyer swiveled his head around just in time to see the Japanese fighter with machine guns firing away. It was coming at him at a perfect 90 degree angle.

*This isn't going to be good,* he thought. *There's no way I can avoid this guy. He's going to cut me in half.*

Like a self-fulfilling prophecy, the bullets spat out of the front of the Japanese fighter and raked through the Hellcat's cockpit. Glass shattered around him, and his aircraft lurched downwards. A bullet had grazed his temple, stunning him and sending a gush of blood down the front of his flight suit.

He came to, seconds later, leaning over the controls, causing the plane to spiral toward the ocean. Wiping the blood from his eyes with his sleeve, he pulled back on the yoke as hard as he could, trying to fight the plane out of its dive. At first, there seemed to be no success, and then the plane imperceptibly nosed up a degree or so. And then another.

He was still in a steep, banking rendezvous with the surf, but oh so painfully and slowly, the plane began to respond to his controls. *This is going to be close. Geez, this is going to be way too close.*

With one last effort, he pulled the Hellcat out of its flirtation with gravity, and got it inching upwards. The plane finally bottomed out about 30 feet above the deck, and began a slow ascent.

"Oh, thank you Jesus," he shouted out.

To himself, he thought: *Stay cool. Stay calm. Time to reassess. What's wrong and what's right. What's left of my airplane?*

*Okay, good news, it seems to be flying just fine.*

Just then a small flame licked out from under the control panel, just above his left leg. The flame became two little tongues of fire and then three. O'Dwyer frantically grabbed for the fire extinguisher, again wiping the blood from his eyes. He aimed it at the flames and tried to get the blast of white chemicals under the panel. For a time, the flames seemed to be winning over the retardant, but as the fire extinguisher belched its last, the flames also seemed to die.

*Holy cow, what's next?*

*Okay, let's start that assessment again. The plane is flying well. No problem. It sure is breezy in here, though.*

He glanced to his right and saw a considerable portion of the canopy was gone, blown away. He counted three, no, four bullet holes in the wind screen. There was no smoke coming from the engine, but the control panel was still smoldering. He started to check his gauges. Air speed indicator, zero. Altimeter, not working. Fuel gauge, also showing zero. Radio, dead.

One by one he looked across the panel. Nothing was functioning. The cockpit had no electricity and several of the gauges and switches had been destroyed by bullets.

*Okay, you don't need instruments to fly this plane. You just need to know where you're going. Holy crap, where am I going?*

He pulled his chart out from his leg pocket and looked at the route he had penciled in to Kavieng.

*So where am I now? I flew right over Kavieng and now I must be in the big bay behind it. O'Dwyer brought the plane around, and he could see in the distance the smoke still billowing up from the harbor.*

*Well, I can't go back that way. I've got to go around Kavieng and then somehow get on a course back to the Bunker Hill.*

He steered to the left, staying over the ocean, avoiding Kavieng by about 25 miles and flying low over the water to avoid any stray Zeros. He got out the medical kit and tried to tie a bandage around his head. The bleeding had almost stopped, but a drop seemed to find its way into his eye now and then.

Flying without instruments was a challenge, but so far so good. *I'll be fine. I'll be fine, as long as I can see where I'm going.* His heart almost stopped with that thought. Already the eastern sky was getting dark. The sun was just now touching the western horizon.

*My only chance is to have a pretty good bead on the ship and then try to find her in the dark.* He knew the ship would be running without lights, especially after the attack on Kavieng had revealed her approximate position to the

Continued on next page

**BUY AND COLLECT VINTAGE MILITARY ITEMS**  
Including insignia, hats, helmets, and uniforms from WW I, WW II, Korea, Vietnam, (I have not started my collection on Southeast Asia yet). I collect Army, USAF, USN, USMC, patches, pins, pictures and souvenirs from all periods. CALL JOE, 612-801-4673 AFTER 6

**Veterans Campground** on Big Marine Lake

11300 180<sup>th</sup> Street N  
Marine on St. Croix, MN  
(651)433-2699  
www.vetscampmn.org



For Veterans, families, & friends. 30 mins NE from DT St. Paul. 10 mins NW of Stillwater on Manning Avenue.

**Open Year Round**

Cabins, RV/Tent Sites, Boating, Trails, Beach at Low Rates  
Managed by Disabled Veterans Rest Camp Assn BOD 501(c)(3)

LAW OFFICE OF  
**TEJEDA GUZMAN**



Antonio Tejada Guzman  
Attorney at Law  
A Veteran serving Veterans

- Worker's Compensation
- Social Security Disability
- VA Disability Appeals

**320-262-3669**  
**877-544-3164**  
214 4th St. SW, Willmar  
www.tejeda-guzman.com

**Independent Rural Living**

Senior apartments for elderly and those with disabilities. Safe, convenient, comfortable, and affordable rural living in Southeast Minnesota.

Also available:  
Housing with Services,  
Nursing Home, Subsidized Rent,  
Homemaker services



**Good Shepherd Lutheran Services**

Contact:  
Samantha 507-864-7714  
or www.goodshep-rushford.org

**MEN,**  
Frequent Bathroom Trips?

Try  
**Bell Ezee Flow Tea**




**Great Health**

"LOOK GREAT, FEEL GREAT"  
Vitamins - Herbs - Supplements  
For Mail Orders: 1-800-458-1613

**Must Help, or Money Will Be Refunded!**

1360 University Ave.  
651-645-2315  
5192 Central Ave. NE  
763-571-5544  
1668 Robert Street  
651-453-9150

**VA DISABILITY APPEALS**



**TOM HAGEN**  
ATTORNEY & VETERAN

**BRADLEY HAGEN & GULLIKSON, LLC**  
GREATER MINNESOTA: (507) 593-4088  
TWIN CITIES METRO: (651) 379-0900  
WWW.BRADLEYLAWMN.COM

**Veterans Linkage Line™**

minnesotaveteran.org | 1-888-LinkVet (546-5838)

Help for veterans and families

# Endorsements

## Harold Meyer runs for Vice Commander

Harold "Hal" Meyer has been endorsed by Marshall Post 113 of District 7 Department of Minnesota as candidate for the position of Districts 2 and 7 Vice Commander.

Meyer has been an active member of The American Legion for 48 years, since 1967. He is a graduate of Marshall High School and served in the U.S. Army.

He has worked his way through the offices of the Marshall Post and District 7

to where he now serves as Sergeant-at-Arms.

Besides his work with the Post and the District he was instrumental in starting the local Sons of the American Legion (SAL) Squadron 113. He has been a member, holding numerous Squadron offices, since its inception and has gone forward as SAL District Commander (2008-2010), and all of the SAL chairs in the District.

He has served as District 7 Commander, District 7

Vice Commander Area D, Vice Commander at Large and Membership Director. He has also held all of the district offices of the S.A.L.

Meyer is also a member of the 40/8 Voyager 62 since 2012 currently holding the position of Correspondent and Commander at Large (Training).

Meyer is married to Pam Meyer and they have five children. They also have twelve grandchildren and two great grandchildren.



HAROLD MEYER

## Wahl endorsed for Vice Commander

Tracy Post 173 has endorsed Harley Wahl for Department of Minnesota Vice Commander for the Second and Seventh Districts for 2016-17.

Wahl served in the Army from 1952-54 during the Korean War.

He has been commander of his post on several occasions.

He has served the Seventh District as commander, vice commander and sergeant-at-arms.

He is a 59-year member of The American Legion.



HARLEY WAHL

## Maxa endorsed for 3rd District Commander

Montgomery Post 79 has endorsed Mike Maxa as Third District Commander 2016.

Maxa is an active member of the post serving as vice commander, commander for five years, Boys State chair, Boy Scout executive

committee for Troop 322, and currently the membership director.

He is also active at the district level for the Thundering Third as a past vice commander for three years, boys state chairman, and currently is the

Membership Director for the district.

Maxa is also the Chairman for the Hospitalized Veterans Fund for the Department of Minnesota American Legion and a member of Squadron 79 Sons of the

American Legion.

Maxa is retired from the United States Air Force after a twenty year career active duty. He and his wife Nancy have been married 37 years and have three children and three grandchildren.

### Military Museum gets certification

The Minnesota Military Museum at Camp Ripley has received certification by the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force and is now eligible to receive equipment and aircraft from the Air Force.

The original goal of the certification was for the museum to obtain a C-130 aircraft, and aircraft common to Camp Ripley. But the museum is now qualified to receive all other types of aircraft and equipment as well.

# A guiding light back home

Continued from the previous page

enemy. His heart sank. The impossibility of finding a dark ship on a black ocean hit him like a blow.

But he sat up straighter in his chair. *Well, when it's the only chance you've got, it's the one you've got to take. Now let's see if I can get this ship aimed in the right direction.*

He watched Kavieng pass off to the right, looked at the chart on his lap, estimated the ship's movement in the hours since he had left, and set the plane on a course. It was less scientific reasoning than it was a wild guess. He glanced to his left and saw that the sun was now about halfway into the ocean.

*I'll have to assume the Japanese fighters are done for the day. If I get some altitude, I might have a little more daylight to work with. Plus, if I have to bail out, I want to be up a few thousand feet. And that's supposing my parachute isn't all shot up.*

He brought the plane up slowly. Without an altimeter, it was impossible to know how far up he went. Without a gas gauge, it was impossible to know what his fuel situation was. I should have plenty to get back, unless they knocked a hole in the gas tank.

An hour went by. The sun had disappeared, but there was still a glow on the horizon that helped O'Dwyer with his dead reckoning. And then the glow was gone. The stars twinkled in the sky, but it was a moonless night. All was pitch black below.

*All right, no need to panic. Just because it's dark and I'm running out of gas and I can't see anything below.*

The engine coughed a few times, just to send his heart rate up another notch.

*Well, merry Christmas to me. Somewhere they're opening presents and laughing and having fun. Somewhere there's that warm glow that I remember as a kid, the kind of glow that only Christmas had. But somewhere is not here. I'm alone and the wind is whipping through this cockpit pretty good. It's cold, and I'm cold. Why me?*

O'Dwyer kept to his course the best he could. But as each mile went by, his heart sank lower and lower. There was no way he was going to find the ship. There really had been no chance from the beginning. Hope had driven him on, but hope was fading.

*Okay, God, it's just me and you up here. I don't think you make deals, but I can't do anything else by myself. So I'm looking to you. I'm not going to tell you that I'll be a better person or start going to church seven days a week. I'm just saying that you're my last chance.*

*I know a couple of thousand years ago, you gave the wise men a star to guide them to your son. I need that star tonight, Lord. I know for sure that I can't do it myself. I can only do it with you.*

O'Dwyer leaned back and closed his eyes. The Hellcat roared along, its engine pulsing through the plane. After a time, he opened his eyes and stared out into the abyss through his broken windshield.

*Where is that star, God?*

Suddenly, a light did catch his eye, but it wasn't in the sky — it was in the ocean below. And it wasn't a bright white, it was green.

O'Dwyer craned his neck to see the ocean below. Yes, that was a green area in the water, sort of a phosphorescent

green. It almost looked like it was glowing.

*What the heck? Is this my star, God?*

O'Dwyer brought his aircraft down a couple of thousand feet, and he could see that the greenish glow in the water headed off slightly to the west. He altered course and followed the trail. As he zoomed over the ocean, the green got brighter and there was more of it. It stretched out in front of him like a great, big green carpet.

*What is it? Where is it leading me? Is this just some reef or something?*

The truth hit him like a baseball bat. What he was seeing was the plankton stirred up by something, giving off a greenish glow. But it would have to be something awfully big to create this kind of green strip. It would have to be really big. Like an aircraft carrier.

Hope leaped in his chest again, as he aimed the Hellcat along the green road. Now, did he have enough gas to get there? Minutes dragged by, and the greenish glow just kept stretching off as far as his eye could see. The green seemed to be getting brighter and the path wider, but there was no end to it.

Suddenly he could see it. In the distance, the green ended abruptly. He could only see black on black, but where the green stopped must be the carrier.

Now, how could he let them know that he was a friendly, and not a Japanese scout plane about to reveal their position? O'Dwyer brought his aircraft down as far as he dared, the greenish carpet giving him some idea of his altitude, and then flew past the carrier, which he could now dimly see, much lower than he would have wanted, wagging his wings all the time. And then it was back into the starry sky to see what would happen. They'd either start shooting at him, or realize he was one of their own.

For an agonizing minute, there was no response from the big ship. Then one light blinked on, and then another, and then enough lights so he could see the outline of the ship. He gazed down, and he could see the ship was turning. It was turning into the wind. It was getting ready to recover him.

O'Dwyer shouted with joy.

*But hang on here, Pete. There's still some problems. You've got to get the landing gear down and hope that system still works. You've got to make a night landing. You've got to make a landing strictly with your eyeballs and no instruments. You've got to catch one of those wires.*

The USS Bunker Hill got its course straight, and then a miracle happened. The big ship turned on all its lights, illuminating the flight deck like daytime.

*Thank you, captain. You're risking your whole ship just to bring me home.*

But now was the big moment. As O'Dwyer brought the Hellcat around in a landing pattern, he flipped the switch to lower the gear.

*Nothing else works, I don't know why this should.*

The only sound he heard was the clicking of the switch. No landing gear. He brought the plane up and flew past the ship's island once more, this time to show them he had no landing gear. As he came around the third time, he saw that they had erected the barrier, a barricade that would catch the plane as it scraped along the flight deck.

*Okay, God. Now I'll just need your help one more time. This time around, O'Dwyer's concentration was only on*

trying to get the Hellcat lined up correctly and in trying to get his speed right. Even with mechanical guides, this was difficult. Without the gauges, it was foolhardy. Every ounce of his experience from hundreds of carrier landings would come into play.

The ship seemed to rise up to meet him. The Landing Signal Officer was waving his paddles, and O'Dwyer adjusted his course accordingly. He realized he was going too fast, but he managed to set the moving plane down on the moving ship lightly enough so that it was a skid instead of a crash. Sparks flew and the sound of the scraping was deafening. The aircraft began to slew sideways. And then the plane hit the barrier. Though it stretched out to lessen the shock, it still was a monumental jolt to stop the 10,000 lb. aircraft in less than a hundred feet.

Before the plane even came to a halt, the emergency squads were all over it with fire extinguishers and fire hoses at the ready. A crew quickly tried to rip off the canopy, which at first didn't want to give because of the damage. But soon, O'Dwyer could feel the sea air on his face. Men helped him to get out.

His feet hit the deck, and he immediately fell to his knees. *Thank you, God. Thank you.*

He looked up and the captain of the ship was looking down at him. "Congratulations lieutenant. That was one hellacious landing. After the docs look you over, you need to come down to the wardroom. Maybe we've still got a present for you. It's Christmas, you know."

"Oh, I know, sir. But I've already got my present this year. God sent me a star, well, not exactly a star..."

"Yes, yes, you can tell me all about it, but now let's get a move on. I've got to shut these lights off before somebody else finds us. And just how the hell did you find us, lieutenant?"

### Auctions WANTED

Seller Pays No Commission  
30-Day Closing

**We Buy Properties**  
Homes, Farms, Businesses,  
Estates and Lands

**Larry Hennig Realty and Auctions**  
320-650-5899  
larryhennig@hotmail.com  
Auctioneer # 71-05-001

### EXPERIENCING VISION LOSS?

**Dr. Chris Palmer can help!**

Unique glasses help Sharon and her twin sister Karen.

Call Dr. Chris Palmer, Optometrist  
for a Free phone consultation  
(888) 882-2040 | www.LowVisionofMN.com

**COMMANDER'S COLUMN**

By Jim Kellogg



First of all I want to thank all of you who attended our joint Fall Conference and all of you who helped make it a success. Working together we can accomplish much. As I write this the first snow fall of the season has arrived in Southern Minnesota. Our weather this fall has been perfect and harvest is nearly complete. We have much to be thankful for. Our harvest was a safe and bountiful one. I recently attended Pheasant dinners in our Veterans Homes. We can be very proud of the care our Veterans

receive. I saw state-of-the-art facilities and very dedicated employees. Not what we often hear about in the news. The caregivers I saw and visited with are a very special group of employees. Be sure to thank them for all they do on your next visit. At this time of thanks and giving we can all give our veterans a priceless gift. We can all give the gift of time spent with them to share their stories of life.

Several of our Districts have had or have planned revitalization events. Thank to all of you who have volunteered your time. You are making a difference. We are reminded by our National Leadership to wear our Legion hats and any Legion logo items we have. Many of us have Legion logo clothing we only wear to Legion events. Why? Show your pride in membership and wear our Legion emblem every chance you get.

During this season of giving those of you who have not renewed your membership yet can give yourself or your post a gift by saving on your dues before the January increase goes into effect. Please review your Post rosters and remember those who may not be able to afford their dues this year. Any of us can fall on hard times.

I hope you all had a great Veterans Day. From my family to yours I wish you a Blessed Christmas. Together we can make a difference.

Safe travels to all and may God Bless.

**Chaplain's Corner**

By Richard Wog



There are times when I want to start this letter and I look at a blank sheet of paper and think there is so much going on. Where do I start? First, I want to say sorry to all the Marines. I missed your November birthday on November tenth. I can truly say that will not happen again.

At a Veteran's Day dinner, Cheryl and I sat with and had the chance to talk to so many other veterans. During the program the Post Commander asked for each branch of the service to stand. He started with the Navy, but of course the Army let him know in a very nice way, that the Army was first. As he went through the branches, he got to the Marines. The person across from me, his first name is Gary, was the only Marine there. Gary looked around and seeing no other Marines said, "It only takes a few good men." I thought that was great.

Every person should know that only one percent of our population has served in the military and is still serving, but also with that one percent serving we have the Legion Family. Not just the post but the Auxiliary, the Sons and Legion members. We all work for the same reason, to support our veterans and the four pillars, starting with family and youth.

Family comes first. If that were only true for others. There are families that have problems. At times family gets forgotten. It happens every year. I think about all the family events that have happened and the ones still to come. But there are those that need family and no one is there. Sometimes I am sorry to say people put themselves first and family second. This also holds true for religion. It is also put on the back burner.

There is a story I want to share with you. It's about a man who wrote a letter to the editor of a newspaper and complained that it made no sense to go to church every Sunday. He wrote, "I've gone to church for thirty years and have heard around 3,000 sermons. But for the life of me I cannot remember one of them." He went on to say, "I think I am wasting my time." This started a real controversy in the letters to the editor.

This went on for weeks until someone wrote, "I've been married for thirty years. In that time my wife has cooked some 32,000 meals. For the life of me I do not remember one of them. But they all nourished me and gave me strength I needed. If my wife had not given me these meals I would be physically dead today." He went on to say, "If I had not gone to church for nourishment, I would be spiritually dead today." I believe what he is also saying in his reply is that without God he is nothing.

The soldiers before us and the soldiers still serving have fought for this right, just as each of you. The freedom to worship your God where and whenever you choose and the freedom of speech and the pursuit of happiness. It is all about God and country.

We are coming to the time of Christmas. It is a time for family to be together and to show their love for each other. Not just by giving gifts. There is more to Christmas than gifts. It is the time to show the world we love our families and each other. We love our country, we love our God. Let us pray for peace in the world and ask for his blessing on all mankind. Please pray for those who have lost so much. Please pray for all who are serving our country. Merry Christmas from my family to yours.

**Mail Call**

**The Case for Veterans Service Organizations Membership**

To the Editor:

VSO's such as The American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars are suffering from a decline in new members. This is partially because of a generational change in attitudes about Social Club memberships. The organizations themselves are not helping this situation by having a lack of family activities. This creates a cycle where younger veterans are not joining and without the younger veterans there is no one to push for or lead family activities.

Many people are aware of the community involvement of VSO's in the area of financial support of; festivals, school activities, and scholarships. Fewer people know of ongoing support of veterans by donations for veteran's facilities, disabled veteran's outdoor activities, and veteran's homes and hospital activities.

Almost no one is aware of the most important role of VSO's and that is the lobbying activities on veterans and service member's issues. While remaining apolitical VSO's maintain a very high grass roots profile to conduct effective lobbying activities at both the State and Federal Level. The American Legion has won national awards for cost effective and successful lobbying. These lobbying activities while less than 100% effective have helped provide increased support for service members and veterans in spite

of the partisan legislative gridlock that has seemingly paralyzed the recent legislative process. When the legislative action committees from the VSO's meet with legislative and government leaders the first question asked is usually how is your membership. Since these organizations do not endorse candidates or donate to campaign's, membership numbers are the only currency they have to offer in support of their cause. Any decline in membership numbers reduces the impact of their lobbying clout.

At many of these VSO's the septuagenarians are the youngsters at many meetings, this will obviously lead to a future with less success in our bipartisan effectiveness as membership declines. The only logical solution is for eligible veterans to join, rejuvenate, and lead these clubs into a strong future. Without this solution the lobbying activities will lose their effectiveness and current and future veterans will suffer from a loss of this highly effective oversight on their behalf.

Westphal American Legion Post 251 in Robbinsdale will celebrate its Centennial Anniversary in 2019 along with many other American Legion Posts. If VSO's are to provide strong leadership on veteran's issues into the future, they will need new members and leaders to provide continued legislative guidance into the next 100 years.

**James B. (JB) Brown**  
Commander, Westphal American Legion Post 251  
Robbinsdale

**Sons of The American Legion**

By Gene Olswold



I hope everyone had a wonderful Thanksgiving, spent with either family, friends or both. As for me and Vickie, it was spent with friends at a local church where they serve a community Thanksgiving Dinner with all the trimmings. We had invites with family, however, Vickie had to work that day so the community dinner worked the best for us. We had a time to share what Thanksgiving meant to us and what we were thankful for. What a nice way to get to know your friends better with this sharing. I hope you had this experience we had in sharing what you were thankful for also. The top of this list by almost everyone is how thankful we are living in this great Nation and enjoying the many freedoms we have but yet sometimes take advantage of as they seem so common place we take for granted many times throughout the year. The Freedom of Worship, the Freedom of Speech, the Freedom of traveling anywhere throughout these beautiful United States, just to name a few.

November was a busy month for me traveling around the state attending the various dinners for Veterans Day functions and membership dinners. I want to thank everyone for the invitations and all the great meals I had. I would be remiss if I didn't mention seeing my old friends again but all the new friends I met as my American Legion family continues to grow. This shows the bonding we experience with the veterans and non-veterans when we participate at all the functions especially the Membership Dinners when the "blue cappers" are in attendance. We need to see more of these guys and gals as they are the strength of our local posts and of The American Legion. I hear many good comments from those attending for the first time like "What a great time I had", "I didn't realize how many do attend

these", "I've missed something all these years", "what a great experience" and the one I like the best is "we all have something in common—we are all Veterans". We can profess these wonderful times we have but until you participate in these events, they mean nothing to those ears they fall upon.

Membership has been great so far this year and we made our National Goal of 35% by Nov. 13th. As of my report from Department, the Detachment of Minnesota on Nov. 25th was at 52.77% and 12th in the National standings. We easily passed our National Target Date of December 9th of 45%. This is just fantastic and I am speechless to say the least. I am so proud of the Minnesota Sons of The American Legion in what we are doing; from all the Detachment officers right down to the squadron leadership for the great work you all are doing. I have to be careful not to puff my chest too much or I will pop the buttons on my shirt. Not only has the renewals been great but the new members we are getting is just phenomenal which show the momentum we have so let's keep it going. I like to keep our Membership Director Cliff busy updating his reports. Some more great news to share as of this article writing is a new squadrons have been chartered - Madison Lake in the Second District but the best is a new charter has been issued to Boys State Alumni in Minnesota. "Welcome Aboard" to these new squadrons. As far as I know, this Boys State Squadron is the second one in the Nation with the first one in California.

My project this year is Legionville with the purchase of park benches to be placed around the New Learning Center and other areas at Legionville to match the one given in memory of Past SAL Detachment Commander John Alfalter. Please send your checks to Department and mark in the memo section Detachment Commander's Project. All donations are greatly appreciated and I thank you.

Merry Christmas to all and drive safe in all your travels this month. Keep those active duty personnel protecting this great nation in your prayers. Many will not be with family again this season. Happy new year and please party responsibly as you bring in 2016.

**The Minnesota Legionnaire**

Official Publication of and Owned Exclusively by The American Legion, Department of Minnesota

**Al Zdon, Editor**

First published in 1920 as the Hennepin County Legionnaire, the Minnesota Legionnaire is now in its 95th year of publication. It is published monthly by The American Legion, Department of Minnesota, Room 300A, 20 West 12th Street, St. Paul, MN 55155-2000. Periodicals postage is paid at St. Paul, MN, and at additional mailing offices. The Legionnaire is a member of the Minnesota Newspaper Association and the National American Legion Press Association.

**SUBSCRIPTION:** \$10 for non-members. Members receive the Legionnaire as part of their dues.

**PHONE:** 651-291-1800, 866-259-9163, FAX: 651-291-1057

**POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to The American Legion, 20 W. 12th Street, St. Paul, MN, 55155-2000. (USPS No. 013-679.) (ISSN No. 1644270)

**ADVERTISING RATES:** Contact Al Zdon, 651-291-1800

**E-MAIL:** azdon@mlgion.org

**WEBSITE:** www.mnlegion.org

**BOARD OF PUBLICATION MEMBERS:** President Jim Kellogg, Taopi; Vice President Don Amundson, Blue Earth; Secretary Randy Tesdahl, Elk River; Treasurer, Richard Horn, Melrose. Board Members include: Bob Lockner, Fridley; Clinton Burt, Slayton; Joe Bayer, Minneapolis; Pat Logan, Bloomington; Virgil Persing, Columbia Heights; Sandy Fredrickson, Glenville, Carol Kottom, Buffalo.

# What's Happening

## Calendars are out

The 2016 official Minnesota American Legion Calendar has been mailed. Not all members receive this calendar in the fund raising mailing, but it is available to all who want it. The calendar features photos of Minnesota American Legion Posts from bygone years.

To obtain a calendar contact Jennifer Kelley at jkelley@mnlegion.org or Al Zdon at azdon@mnlegion.org or call 651-291-1800.

## Pearl Harbor Day

A tribute to Americans who fought at Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941, will be held at the Minnesota National Guard Armory at the Capitol in St. Paul on Monday, Dec. 7, at 10 a.m. The event previously was held at the Veterans Service Building.

It will be sponsored by the Minnesota Disabled American Veterans and the Ft. Snelling National Cemetery Memorial Rifle Squad.

Richard Thill, a survivor of the attack and part of the Minnesota contingent on the USS Ward that day, will be the guest speaker. Thill is one of the last survivors of the Ward. The ship fired the first shot of World War II for the United States.

## Band at Pearl Harbor

The Kerkhoven/Murdock/Sunberg High School Marching Saints will be the only band to represent Minnesota at the 75th anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor in December of next year. They will be part of a mass band that will commemorate the beginning of World War II.

Legion posts are being asked to contribute to the cost of sending the band to Hawaii. Donations can be sent to IKMS Music Parents, Box 168, Kerkhovan, MN 56252 or go to [www.kms.k12.mn.us](http://www.kms.k12.mn.us).

## Veterans Town Hall

There will be a Veterans Town Hall meeting on Wednesday, Dec. 9, from 4-6 p.m. at the Whipple Federal Building at the Fort Snelling Upper Post.

Veterans are encouraged to attend to voice their com-

ments about the Veterans Administration or other subjects.

## Aitkin Vietnam Photo Exhibit

The Jaques Art Center in Aitkin will host a photography exhibit starting at the end of February next year called "Vietnam, a Window to War." The photographer is James R. Thompson, a Vietnam veteran and a native of Aitkin.

Vietnam vets and others are invited to the opening reception to meet Thompson. The reception will be held Feb. 27. The exhibit will be open Feb. 26 through April 9.

## Golf Job Openings for Vets

Interlachen Country Club, located in Edina, is seeking veterans who might be interested in working at a golf club. Flexible scheduling is available.

Positions start in the spring, but interviews are being held currently. Applications are available at [www.interlachencountryclub.com](http://www.interlachencountryclub.com).

## Save That Date

The Annual Minnesota American Legion Family Day at the Twins will be held on Friday, May 20, at Target Field. Reduced price tickets will be available, and Commander Jim Kellogg will throw out the first pitch. More details will be announced later. Tickets are not yet on sale.

## Legal Clinics

Free drop-in legal clinics will be held:

-- Tuesday, Dec. 8, at the St. Cloud VA Auditorium from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

-- Thursday, Dec. 10, at the Anoka County Government Center from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

The clinics will offer professional help in housing, employment, benefits, debt collection, expungement, family law including child support.

## Round Tables

The St. Croix Valley Civil War Roundtable will next meet on Jan. 25, and the subject will be American-British diplomatic relations during the Civil War with Doug Johnson. For more information, call Steve Anderson at 715-386-1268. These are dinner meetings are held at the Lowell

Inn in Stillwater.

The World War II History Round Table at Fort Snelling History Center will feature "Early Naval Aviation Operations" with Stephen Moore, an author who wrote "Pacific Payback." He will be joined by veterans of Navy and Marine aviation. The meeting will be held on Thursday, Dec. 10, at the history center. A \$5 donation will be accepted.

The World War II History Round Table also announced changes to its program for the coming year. The program scheduled for October will be held on April 28. It will feature author Pat O'Donnell speaking on OSS Maritime units, and will look into the beginning of the SEALS.

The Round Table will also be changing its program for March 10. The new program will feature Douglas Waller on the history of the directors of the CIA that came out of World War II's OSS.

The January program is now in flux also, and a replacement program will be announced soon.

The Rochester Veterans Roundtable will be held Monday, Dec. 14, and will feature "A Country Doctor Goes to War" with Tammy Thayer. The meeting starts at Autumn Ridge Church at 7 p.m. and a \$5 donation is accepted.

## Pets Loyal 2 Vets

The Pets Loyal 2 Vets program will hold its second annual Wine, Craft Beer and Fine Spirits tasting on Saturday, April 30, at the Flying Cloud Airport in Eden Prairie. Several World War II planes will be on display. The goal is to raise \$10,000 to provide service dogs for veterans with traumatic brain injuries.

For more information, go to [www.petsloyal2vets.org](http://www.petsloyal2vets.org).

## Gold Dog Tags

The Minnesota Military Museum is offering a Christmas gift idea. The museum will provide a veteran with a remembrance gold dog tag and place a second gold dog tag on the Veterans Support Wall at the museum at Camp Ripley.

For more information about veterans registry, contact the museum at [www.mnmilitarymuseum.org](http://www.mnmilitarymuseum.org) or call 320-616-6050.

The museum is open from 9-4 on Thursdays and Fridays in the winter.

# Taps

## Snow, Donald L.

68, Army veteran of the Vietnam War, died Oct. 25. He was very active in Legion activities, serving as Eighth District Commander from 2002-03, Department Vice Commander, 2008-09, and Department Sergeant-at-Arms, 2009-10. He was also active in the 40/8. He was a past commander of Grand Rapids Post 60.

**Rasmussen, Scott James**, 64, Air Force veteran of the Vietnam War, died Nov. 20, 2015. He was a member of Austin Post 91.

**Schaffer, William R.**, 91, Navy veteran of World War II, died Nov. 9, 2015. He was a member of Austin Post 91.

**Sauer, Harold**, 69, Army veteran of the Vietnam War, died Nov. 7, 2015. He was a former adjutant of Hamel Post 394.

**Hall, Richard Everett**, 93, Coast Guard veteran of World War II, died Nov. 15, 2015. He was a member of Austin Post 91.

**Govig, Dean**, 84, Navy veteran of the Korean War, died Nov. 8, 2015. He was a member of New London Post 537.

**Schmakel, Neil A.**, 61, Marine Corps veteran of the Vietnam War, died Nov. 10, 2015. He was a member of Waconia Post 150.

**Lovander, Kenneth L.**, 90, Army veteran of World War II, died Nov. 4, 2015. He was a member of Willmar Post 167.

**Torkelson, DeLloyd A.**, 83, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Nov. 5, 2015. He was a member of Willmar Post 167.

**Zimmerman, Delmar L.**, 84, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Nov. 13, 2015. He was a member of Willmar Post 167.

**Rolfe, Robert**, 71, Army veteran of the Vietnam War, died Nov. 12, 2015. He was a member of Zimmerman Post 560.

**Fiala, Belva**, 93, Army veteran of World War II, died Oct. 21, 2015. She served in the Women's Army Corps in Washington D.C. as a decoder at the Pentagon. She was a member of SPAM post 570 and Austin Post 91.

**Moore, Richard H.**, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Nov. 3, 2015. He was a member of Albert Lea Post 56.

**Carlstrom, Richard A.**, 88, Marine Corps veteran of World War II, died Oct. 28, 2015. He was a member of North Branch Post 85.

**Morris, Dale G.**, Army veteran of the Vietnam War, died Nov. 7, 2015. He was a past commander of Claremont Post 422.

**Polich, Robert Michael**, 94, Army Air Corps veteran of World War II, died Sept. 30, 2015. He was a B-17 pilot in Europe and was a prisoner of war. He was a member of Ironton Post 443.

**Buss, Clifford V.**, 95, Army veteran of World War II, died Oct. 28, 2015. He was a medic at Okinawa and in the Philippines. He was a member of Morris Post 29.

**Fisher, Gordon**, 95, Army Air Corps pilot in World War II, died Oct. 28, 2015. He flew nearly every Army plane as a transport pilot in Europe. He served in the Air Force Reserves until 1980, retiring as a lieutenant colonel. He was a member of Red Wing Post 54.

**Wahlers, Earl W.**, 89, Marine Corps veteran of the Korean War, died Oct. 17, 2015. He was a communications teletype operator. He was a member of Albert Lea Post 56.

**Ramsey, Robert**, 82, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Nov. 5, 2015. He was a member of Little Falls Post 46.

**Niemeyer, John**, 87, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Oct. 10, 2015. He served 13 months in Korea. He was a member of Long Prairie Post 12.

**Woizeschke, Paul Martin**, 75, National Guard veteran of the Vietnam War, died Oct. 27, 2015. He served for 20 years and was a mess sergeant. He was a member of Windom Post 206.

**Schmitz, Reinhard**, 91, Army veteran of World War II, died Nov. 5, 2015. He served in Europe. He was a member of Wheaton Post 80.

**Scherer, Wilbert G.**, 83, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Nov. 6, 2015. He was a member of St. Joseph Post 328.

**Hansen, Kenneth R.**, 90, Army Air Corps veteran of World War II, died Oct. 9, 2015. He was a member of Roseville Post 542.

**Thorstad, Maynard**, 83, Air Force veteran of the Korean War, died Oct. 23, 2015. He was a waist gunner on a B-29. He was a member of Hoffman Post 393.

**Adolphsen, Jerome R.**, 78, Air Force veteran of the Korean War, died Oct. 15, 2015. He was a member of St. Joseph Post 328.

**Prom, Nicholas R.**, 65, Army veteran of the Vietnam War, died Oct. 18, 2015. He was a member of St. Joseph Post 328.

**Danielson, Donald**, 94, Army veteran of World War II, died Oct. 20, 2015. He served for three years as a radio operator in Europe. He was awarded the Bronze Star. He was a member of Mora Post 201.

**Larson, Kermit E.**, 91, Navy veteran of World War II, died Oct. 17, 2015. He was a pilot. He was a member of the

color guard of Dent Post 148.

**Arends, Larry G.**, 75, Army veteran of the Vietnam War, died Oct. 23, 2015. He served in Germany. He was a member of Ellsworth Post 196.

**Mullins, Richard**, 54, Army veteran of the Lebanon and Grenada Wars, died Oct. 6, 2015. He was a member of Pine City Post 51.

**Hulstein, Egbert R.**, 82, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Oct. 22, 2015. He served in Germany. He was a member of Edgerton Post 42.

**Perry, Robert D. "Doug"**, 82, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Nov. 19, 2015. He was a member of the color guard of Chicago City Post 272.

**Ladner, John C.**, 95, Army veteran of World War II, died Nov. 18, 2015. He was stationed at the Presidio in San Francisco. He was a member of Granite Falls Post 69.

**Undeberg, Helmer**, 90, Navy veteran of World War II, died Nov. 5, 2015. He was a Seabee, serving in the Pacific. He was a member of Eyota Post 551.

**Graves, Kenneth**, 80, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Nov. 6, 2015. He was a member of Cloquet Post 262.

**Johnson, Chuck**, 83, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Nov. 11, 2015. He was a tank sergeant and earned a Purple Heart and two Bronze Stars. He was a member of Cloquet Post 262.

**Tveit, Donald**, 90, Army veteran of World War II, died Nov. 2, 2015. He was a member of Cloquet Post 262.

**Gray, Zane**, 89, Army veteran of World War II, died Oct. 19, 2015. He served in the Philippines. He was a member of Cloquet Post 262.

**Gohl, Peter**, 95, Army veteran of World War II, died Nov. 6, 2015. He served in the 65th Division. He was a member of Pierz Post 341.

**Rosen, James E.**, 76, Navy veteran of the Vietnam War, died Nov. 1, 2015. He served on the USS Independence as a jet mechanic. He was a member of Princeton Post 216.

**Haaland, Martin**, 91, Army Air Corps veteran of World War II, died Oct. 9, 2015. He served in the 15th Air Force in Italy as a waist gunner in a B-17 bomber. He was a member of Alexandria Post 87.

**Johnston, Richard Arthur**, 69, Air Force veteran of the Vietnam War, died Oct. 28, 2015. He served in Vietnam. He was a member of Elysian Post 311.

**Schuttloffel, Robert J.**, 73, Air National Guard veteran of the Vietnam War. He was a member of Elysian Post 311.

**McManus, Dr. John T.**, 83, Army veteran of the Vietnam War, died Oct. 20, 2015. He was a radiologist in Vietnam and assisted in setting up the first evacuation hospital. He was a member of Anoka Post 102.

## Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

By  
Jeremy Wolfsteller



Not everyone can say they've sacrificed a part of their own life for the purpose of America's freedom. Serving your country will be one of your life's greatest and most honorable achievements. Most of us signed the dotted line because we believed in a country that is free because of the brave and it's a "system worth saving."

The American Legion was founded after World War I by veterans who had another common interest other than serving Old Glory. They wanted to ensure our nation's veterans had an opportunity after service for prosperity. In August 1921, The Legion's efforts resulted in the creation of the U.S. Veterans Bureau, forerunner of the Veterans Administration. Years later, in June 1944, Legionnaires had drafted and pushed through Congress the greatest piece of legislation known as "The GI Bill of Rights." This bill became law and provided veterans with education benefits, home loans and employment opportunities, while boosting the economy with hope. These great benefits were administered by the U.S. Veterans Administration.

As we take a look at where the Department of Veterans Affairs, as we now call it, is today, we need to remember that it is a, "system worth saving." It's a system that we the veterans helped create.

Yes the VA has a tremendous responsibility in front of it and as long as our country requires our citizens to serve this great nation then the VA must be ready to serve this great nation of veterans whom exemplified selfless service, honor and dedication to a "system worth saving." We must continue to put pressure on the VA to fix its inadequacies but also make sure we acknowledge and support its great accomplishments.



**LEGION PROVIDES SCHOLARSHIPS** -- Two graduate students were presented the annual Brain Science Scholarships during the annual Brain Sciences Lecture at the University of Minnesota. From left: Brain Sciences President Jim Munson, Rachel Johnson, Adele DeNicola, and Dr. Apostolos Georgopoulos, who holds the American Legion Family Brain Sciences Chair and heads the research work at the Minneapolis VA Medical Center. DeNicola is studying schizophrenia. Johnson is doing research on PTSD and how it applies to women veterans.

## Thank you

I want to say thank you so much from myself, Peggy and our children for the prayers, condolences, flowers, and memorials sent for the loss of my mother. The memorials are being given to the church for masses in her name and one has gone to the Department Outdoors program. Her first husband (widowed) as well as my father (her second) were both veterans and avid outdoorsmen. Also of my nine step brothers, and sisters, several of them are veterans and most all are very involved in hunting and fishing. She loved to cook especially if it was something that the boys brought home from the field, whether it was fish, pheasant, venison, or rabbit. So the donation to the Veterans Outdoors program was right where she would have wanted it.

Thank you. We will miss her.  
Randy Tesdahl, Department Adjutant

## American Legion Riders

Paul Edwards  
Director, Sixth District



Greetings to the Department of Minnesota Legion Family from the Mighty Sixth District.

OK, OK. I acknowledge that it might be time to surrender the handlebars for this year. Even though the riding season is pretty much ended for 2015, that does not mean that ALR in the Sixth District is going dormant. While we might not be doing much riding during this time of year, it is time to think of the future. Get rides and events on your calendars and publish them. Get other chapters involved in your activities. Make your plans now to support your community activities during the next year. Memorial Day and 4th of July parades are a great way to get the organization out in front of the community and attract new members. Don't forget to include rides that benefit veterans and their families. The Wounded Warrior MN ride and the Legion Legacy Scholarship Ride come immediately to mind.

I mentioned other chapters above. I am happy to report that the 6th District ALR family is growing. I have been in contact with a number of posts in the past few weeks and I am happy to report that things are moving toward new chapters in Bemidji, Little Falls and in Zimmerman. I am excited that over the next few weeks and months, I expect to be traveling to each of those posts to help in the establishment of chapters.

In the course of my conversations, I also learned that one chapter has gone pretty much inactive due to strife caused by club politics. We need to remember that we are not an MC. We are Legion Family members who ride motorcycles and we gather around that concept, not the idea that we are elite. I encourage all of us to leave our personal agendas and thoughts of self-aggrandizement out of the ALR.

Chapter members please support your Post, District and Department activities. Remember, you are a Legion Family member first, then a Legion Rider.

Sue and I wish everybody in our Legion Family a Merry Christmas and a Happy, Healthy and Prosperous New Year. Keep the shiny side up.

## Legion: VA officials who abused system were actually rewarded

American Legion National Commander Dale Barnett lashed out recently over continued revelations about paltry punishments issued to Department of Veterans Affairs executives who were found to have manipulated the travel and relocation bonus system to line their pockets with hundreds of thousands of dollars.

"The lack of accountability displayed by VA leadership here is disgusting," Barnett said. "These corrupt executives didn't face harsh consequences for their actions. They actually may have improved their economic worth."

According to the *Houston Chronicle*, former Philadelphia VA Regional Office Director Diana Rubens will take a \$20,000 pay cut from her salary of over \$180,000 to assume a slightly lesser VA management role in Houston. According to cost-of-living indicators, it takes about \$120,000 a year in Houston to maintain the lifestyle of a \$180,000 annual salary in Philadelphia. "She's still making out better on the deal," said Barnett, "even when you don't include the additional relocation package."

"It boggles the mind to see the level of protection VA employees have from their own wrongdoings when the very veterans they are supposed to be serving slip through the cracks, some of whom will sleep on the streets with empty

bellies this Thanksgiving."

Barnett's reaction came after revelations in a *Military Times* article that Rubens and Kimberly Graves, who also was removed from her position in St. Paul, Minn., over similar actions that were exposed in a VA Inspector General's report, will receive thousands in additional relocation dollars after they were found to have manipulated the system for over \$400,000 earlier, money that VA will not try to recoup as part of their punishment.

"It's crushing to see that the system still protects the wrongdoers, with seemingly impenetrable armor to shield them from responsibility while veterans are stuck outside waiting for medical appointments and suffering through an outrageous backlog just to be fairly compensated for injuries they sustained protecting America. To make matters

worse, we also find out that Graves is headed to Phoenix. As if veterans in that city haven't already suffered enough after the wait-time scandal erupted in the VA health-care system there in 2014.

"VA's top management (Secretary Robert McDonald and Deputy Secretary Sloan Gibson) promised veterans that VA employees who wronged veterans would be held accountable, but cushy landing spots, still in leadership positions, at similar or even better pay when cost of living is factored in, are not even a slap on the wrist. I'm disgusted VA never fired these people, nor did it even try to recoup hundreds of thousands of dollars they manipulated out of the system. If this is the best justice we can expect, it doesn't bode well for VA's promise to win back the trust of veterans."

## Legion to Congress: MST victims need options

At the forefront of advocacy efforts to improve comprehensive care options and better awareness training for Department of

Veterans Affairs medical professionals providing care to military sexual trauma survivors, The American Legion presented written and oral testimony during a congressional hearing Nov. 17.

LaRhanda Holt, assistant director for women and minority veteran outreach, testified before the House Committee on Veteran Affairs Subcommittee on Health regarding the Military Sexual Assault Victims Empowerment Act. Intended to amend the Veterans Access, Choice and Accountability Act of 2014, the bill aims to improve the private treatment of veterans who are MST survivors. Through this piece of legislation, MST victims could potentially be eligible for non-VA health care under the Veterans Choice Program.

Holt explained to the committee how untreated symptoms are a nexus to

other mental health conditions, including post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, substance abuse and suicidal ideations.

"Ultimately, this is about trying to find the right treatments and therapies for every veteran, and in the case of MST, unique circumstances can shape treatment and therapy needs," she said. "VA should be flexible to ensure these veterans receive the appropriate health care they need in an environment that is conducive to the veteran's unique circumstances."

Ensuring they get the appropriate treatment and therapy can mean the difference between a survivor continuing his or her treatment, or abandoning treatment and feeling further isolation and a possible escalation of their symptoms.

The American Legion is deeply concerned with the challenges survivors of

MST face, imploring members of Congress to ensure MST survivors can receive the right health care, at the right place and at the right time.

In January 2011, The American Legion launched a landmark women veterans survey that identified challenges women veterans face when receiving gender-specific health care for the treatment of MST conditions throughout VA health-care facilities. Since then, the Legion has since fought for better awareness training in VA for MST sensitivity, significant increases in outreach, and to provide more comprehensive care options for MST survivors, including female therapists, group therapies, and other options to make care for MST more accessible in the community.

## Membership Chart

As of Nov. 25, 2015

District	2016 Goal	Total 2015	Total 2016	Percent of Goal	Same Date '14
1	9,627	9,574	7,816	81.19	8,015
2	7,779	7,705	6,213	79.87	6,477
3	12,165	12,116	9,849	80.96	9,933
4	2,561	2,560	2,049	80.01	2,059
5	2,829	2,788	2,206	78.01	2,290
6	12,485	12,415	10,001	80.10	10,178
7	6,997	6,926	5,644	80.69	5,728
8	4,630	4,593	3,527	76.18	3,703
9	7,332	7,172	5,722	79.12	6,005
10	10,964	10,917	8,670	79.08	8,989
At-large	3,734	2,661	2,074	55.54	2,089
<b>Totals</b>	<b>81,000</b>	<b>79,427</b>	<b>63,771</b>	<b>78.73</b>	<b>65,466</b>

## Minnesotans named to national panels for the coming year

Continued from Page 1

National Security Commission Liaison Committee. Steven Kleinglass of Mendota Heights was named a consultant to the Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission.

Tom Fernlund of St. Cloud will served on the Media and Communications Commission.

Don Pankake of Hutchinson was named to the Membership and Post Activities Committee.

Philip Bellefeuille, Callaway, John Bey, Baudette, Wayne Gilbertson, Zimmerman, Carl Hendrickson, Cloquet, Sylvan Fix of Brownsville and Richard Wog, Willmar, were appointed as a members of the Americanism Council.

Michael Ash, St. Paul, Wayne Hammon Jr. of LeRoy, and Robin Picray, St. Paul, were named as members of the Media and Communications Council.

Minnesota will have 11 members on the National Security Council. They are: Don Amundson, Blue Earth; Richard Gosse, Wabasha; Tim Haugen, Moorhead; Steve Johnson, Morton; James Kellogg, Taopi; Lloyd Rieker, Dawson; Michael Schaffer, Fulda; Don Schroedl, Minneapolis; E. Jerry St. Michel, Grand Rapids; Wes Thompson, Sartell; and Cal Van Horn, Morris.

Jeff Olson, formerly of Stillwater and residing in Green Valley, AZ, will be the National Commander's Representative on the Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission. Bill Barknecht of Battle Lake will also serve on the commission.

Tom Lannon, Prior Lake, was appointed to the Veterans Benefits Committee.

There will be five Minnesotans on the Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Council: Jim Blakesley, Aitkin; Clinton Burt, Slayton; Tom Conway, Argyle; Denise Milton, Bagley; Orville Otterness, North Branch.

Thomas Sanders of Pine City and Darrel Redepenning, Fridley, were named to the Veterans Employment and Education Council.

Tess Davis of Princeton was named to the Americanism Commission.

Ray DeZurik of Breezy Point was appointed to the Employment and Veterans Preference Committee.

Don Hayden, LeCenter, was named to the Internal Affairs Commission as a consultant.

Richard Janssen of Richmond was named to the Constitution and By-Laws Committee as the National Commander's Representative. Don Walsler, Hutchinson, also serves on the committee.

Curtis Norenberg of Roseville will be a consultant on the Aerospace Committee.

Al Zdon, Mounds View, will continue to serve on the 100th Anniversary Observance Committee.

Floyd Kumerow will continue to serve on the National Cemetery Committee.



**EXPRESSIVE WRITING** -- Dr. Nina Sayer of the Center for Chronic Disease Outcomes Research at the Minneapolis VA Health Care System was the principal researcher in a study that showed that veterans who wrote expressively about their reintegration experience received some benefit both in reintegration and in dealing with PTSD. Photo by April Eilers.

## Writing deepest thoughts may help vets

Continued from Page 1

selected 20,000 veterans across the country and sent them a letter asking if they would participate.

Veterans had to fill out a form and mail it back. "We asked for veterans who believed they had a little or more than a little reintegration difficulty."

The researchers wanted the study to be easy for veterans to participate in without any clinical involvement.

Over 8,000 sent back the form, but 4,000 were eliminated immediately because they said they had no reintegration problems. Another four percent were culled out because they said they had severe depression.

In the end, about 1,300 used the internet to do the test. About 500 were asked to write expressively about their reintegration four times, at twenty minutes a time. About 500 others were asked to write factually about various VA subjects. Another 200 were not asked to do any writing at all.

Standardized testing was done before the exercise, three months later and six months later.

Sayer said the change in the veterans was small, but positive. She said because the exercise is so easy to administer, it would be easy for future efforts to reach a wide population of veterans.

And, Sayer said, the results showed no negative results from writing expressively about reintegration. "There seem to be no risks or harms, no indicators of negative reaction.

We also saw that the results were the same for men and women."

Expressive writing might be helpful even for those seeking professional help.

"The benefits found in the study were small, but it seemed to be a helpful intervention for those going through a major life transition."

She noted, though, that the study only asked the respondents to write about their reintegration problems and not about whatever trauma they might have faced in the military or elsewhere.

The study was published in the *Journal of Traumatic Stress* in October 2015. Now that the study is done, Sayer said she is interested in digging into the data again to find out more.

"I'd like to talk to vets. I'm curious to know what veterans might think about this. I'd like to know more about who would benefit, or what we could do to make the effect stronger."

Sayer is a native of New York and has a clinical psychology degree from New York University. She has been employed by the federal government for 23 years and has worked with helping veterans with PTSD. Several years ago, she decided to pursue a career of doing research full time.

## Third District Adjutant Linda Dvorak honored by Air Guard

Linda Dvorak, who served in the Minnesota Air National Guard from 1976 to 2002, was recently honored by being brevetted to Chief Master Sergeant.

Dvorak has been active in The American Legion. She was adjutant for New Prague Post 45 and later served as Financial Officer. In 2013 she was selected as Adjutant for the Third District.

The ceremony was held at the National Guard Armory at the Capitol in November.

The brevet was recommended by Brigadier Gen. Robert Cayton (Ret.) and by Capt. Kurt Steinmetz, and was approved by Adjutant General Richard Nash and by Governor Mark Dayton.

In the military, a brevet honors a serving

member or a retired veteran to hold a high-or-rank. In time of war, brevetting is often used to temporarily fill officer or enlisted spots, and when retired it is often to honor a person for long and devoted service.

Dvorak joined the Air Guard in 1976 and had held many positions including personnel systems manager, training specialist, career advisor and personal affairs technician.

Her work in revising the Excellence in Training Award had an impact on the entire Air National Guard Training Community.

She was hired onto the Joint Forces Headquarters Air Staff in 2004 and has "been the cornerstone of continuity for the staff" according to the program at the ceremony. "She has earned the trust and confidence of the National Guard Bureau and the Air Reserve Personnel Center, and has been the constant go-to person at JFHQ for Air personnel."

Dvorak was pinned at the ceremony by Col. James Wentzlaff.

Dvorak and her husband, Mark, live in Le Center and have six children. Mark is also active in The American Legion and is a past Third District Commander and now serves as Department Sergeant-at-Arms.

A reception was later held at McGovern's.



**HONORED BY AIR GUARD** -- Third District Adjutant Linda Dvorak was honored by the Air Guard by being brevetted to Chief Master Sergeant. The award was presented by Col. James Wentzlaff. At left is her husband, Mark Dvorak.

## Women vets honored

The Minneapolis VA Health Care System's Women Veteran Campaign honored two veterans a group.

Liz Strohfus, a WASP pilot in World War II, and Donna Paal, a Navy career veteran who is a transition patient advocate at the Minneapolis VA were honored along with the Women Veterans Initiative, a group formed in 2008 to address gaps in service to women veterans.

Past Department Commander Peggy Moon was nominated for the award.

# Okinawa Diary

The following story is taken from *Carl, A Marine & His Comrades, The Diary of Carlyle Knaus, 1945*. The diary was published by his family after his death.

Edited by Al Zdon

Carlyle Knaus was 27 years old with two children when he got drafted into the Navy in April 1944. He was one of 1.5 million young American men who were drafted that year.

Knaus had grown up in Kimball, Minnesota, in the family's residence above the Knaus Meat Market. He was the youngest of 10 children. His nickname was Abbie.

While he was lined up for his induction in Minneapolis, a Marine recruiter came into the room and announced that the Marines were two men short for that day. Perhaps it was Knaus' strong physique, or maybe it was his broad, handsome face that made him look like a Marine, but he was one of the lucky two.

A few days later, he was in San Diego at Marine Corps boot camp.

On Sept. 11, he was sent overseas. As the new year began, Knaus was stationed somewhere in the Pacific, probably Pavuvu. As a gift, his wife Laverne "Sunshine" gave him a diary. He was faithful about making daily entries, and his candor and writing reveal a true and clear picture of what it was like for a Marine in the final, brutal months of the war.

**Jan. 1 [1945]** – Since I got this diary book from my Darling Wife, I know no better time to start filling the pages with the most important events of my life than this first day of 45.

**Jan. 3** – I spent practically the whole day peeling potatoes.

**Jan. 5** – I put in an awful rugged day today. I got in about four loads of food today. I talked to Lt. Harper to give me a working party to give me a lift, which I got.

P.S. Somebody stole my five beers!

**Jan. 6** – I got transferred today as a B.A.R. [Browning Automatic Rifle] man in the second group. I was the assistant B.A.R. man to the best man in the company, Ski.

**Jan. 7** – Went to church today as usual at 10:30... Nale and I went to the show and saw "Cover Girl" which was very good.

**Jan. 8** – Got five letters today from my darling wife, and nothing could happen that could make a person feel better than letters from home.

**Jan. 11** – This evening Nale and I went to the Red Cross, not only to see the females, but to shoot the breeze with them. After eating a half dozen or so of donuts and the same amount of chocolate we went and played beano. Believe it or not, I won the first game. I thought I was going to get a Red Cross nurse, but all I got was two packs of cigarettes. Better luck next time, Abbie, better luck.

**Jan. 13** – I was plainly informed that I was demoted to the fellow that slings the chow to the chow-hounds once again. I told the sergeant that he couldn't do it, and I was going to see the chaplain. Ha, ha.

**Jan. 15** – Everybody is in a mess this evening. We are going on a five-day bivouac, and we are drawing all kinds of gear... We had an inspection and one fellow had all his gear, a pair of silk shorts, and bow-tie on, and a cigar.

**Jan. 16** – Everything was fine the first 10 minutes, then my hammock started to slip inch by inch and the first thing I knew I was sleeping on the deck. I slept well through, considering the ground had coral on it, and my ringworms, crotch itch, athlete's feet, prickly heat rash and the rain bothered me.

**Jan. 17** – It was the first time I had a chance to shoot my new B.A.R... We finally captured our mock enemy. Hell and my weapon was red hot, and so was I.

**Jan. 19** – We went out in ducks [amphibious landing vehicles] and then circled around in the water for about an hour before we made our beach landing. As usual, everything and everybody was all fouled up, but in order to make a beach landing the Marine Corps way, that is the way it must be done. So it was classified as successful.

**Jan. 20** – My clothes stink so bad from perspiration that they almost make me sick.

**Jan. 22** – Bring on the Japs, because the sooner we get them, the sooner we go home.

**Jan. 23** – Today at the mess hall, we served ice cream. The sergeant made us mess men eat last, and by that time there was no ice cream left or anything else. We went on strike: no chow, no work. Snowball went and told his lieutenant and the lieutenant went and got the cooks out of the shower, bath and the sacks to make us chow. The excitement lasted for about an hour before all the sergeants and lieutenants and us mess men came to peaceable terms.

**Jan. 31** – By the way, our commanding officer just came from the states where he was in charge of some barns. We secured the problem [the unit was on maneuvers probably at Guadalcanal] and went to our area and shot the breeze while we drank our quota of beer.

**Feb. 1** – P.S. I am getting damn tired of C-rations.

**Feb. 4** – We went swimming all day today and about 20 of us grab-assing on shore, all bare naked. And to our surprise a Jeep came up and turned around just in front of us. The Jeep contained two officers and three blushing Red Cross nurses.

*Carlyle Knaus of Kimball was drafted into the Marines in 1943. He was sent to Okinawa in April 1944 and fought there until the island was secured. His diary shows both the lighter, day-to-day side of the Marine Corps and the awful brutality of war.*



**Feb. 6** – The land crabs are on the move again. The crabs are about the size of a saucer dish with two large pinchers. At night they move. They crawl up the mosquito nets and get in bed with you; that is a terrible scare... It is nothing to kill thirty to forty every morning in our tent.

**Feb. 11** – I decided to drink my beer today, which is a



**CARLYLE KNAUS**  
On the Kimball Post 261 color guard in 1999



**CARLYLE KNAUS**  
In the Marine Corps during World War II