



# Legionnaire

Volume 98, Number 2

For God and Country

February 2016

## Need to get around? New state ride service might be the answer

Minnesota veterans needing transportation now have a new way to figure out local options to get around.

The Minnesota Ride Link, a program with several government partners including the County Veterans Service Officers, can provide fast and easy information about transportation services in an area.

Ride Link can help veterans, military families and others to a single source of information for trips in their local area for such reasons as employment, medical, recreational and shopping.

The link is made through the MinnesotaHelp Network, the state's existing one-call/ one click virtual information center.

"Veterans can still contact their CVSOs for assistance," Ride Link Project Coordinator Gary Taft said.

Veterans can get to the website by going to [www.MinnesotaHelp.info](http://www.MinnesotaHelp.info). Scroll down and click on the transportation option.

The website also has a veterans' link that can connect users with information on various topics such as benefits, education, hospitals and clinics, and more. It also has links to other sites such as the crisis line, or the CVSOs.

Ride Link is hoping to provide a way for agencies to talk to one another to better assist veterans and others.

The program was made possible by a grant from the Federal Transit Administration to the Minnesota

Department of Transportation. The cooperative program includes the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs, the Minnesota Board on Aging and the Minnesota Department of Human Services.

Taft said the new service also includes access to a program called Revation, a software tool that allows parties to have secure conversations with each other and the opportunity to exchange information, such as medical or veterans' records, securely.

Veterans can locate their local CVSO by going to their state site: [Macvso.org](http://Macvso.org) and clicking on "directory."

## EIGHT STARS ON THE BANNER

The Stanek Family of Austin sent eight children and the family dog to war in World War II.

Story on pages 8-10



## Wisconsin makes sure every veteran has a proper burial

Serving in the U.S. Army, Terrence Sund drowned while searching a tunnel in Vietnam 1967. His body was sent home and was cremated. Then, his cremated remains were interred in a room at a cemetery in Wisconsin for decades.

Thanks to Department of Wisconsin American Legion efforts, Sund received a full military burial last summer. And the department has helped draft a bill that will ensure the remains of veterans not claimed by family members will be released so that the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA) can arrange a military burial at one of the state's veteran cemeteries.

According to the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, Legionnaire Steve Conto was able to raise funds so that Sund could get the funeral he deserved. Since then, the Department of Wisconsin has set up a fund to assist with burial costs for similar deceased veterans.

Department Adjutant Dave Kurtz said the effort has been a partnership between the Legion, Gov. Scott Walker and the WDVA. Waukesha County Veterans Service Officer

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## Commander's Task Force sets 2016 goals

The Commander's Task Force, representing the veterans community in Minnesota, has agreed on a list of seven priorities for this coming session of the Minnesota Legislature.

The state legislature will go back into session March 8. The list includes:

- A request for bonding and funding to support the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs. Funding is needed to maintain the five Minnesota Veterans Homes in the state system. Bonding is needed to fix the bridge between the Minnesota Veterans Home in Minneapolis with Minnehaha Parkway. The bridge has been closed since

2014 due to safety concerns and failed bridge inspections.

- A bill that would expand the permitted uses of the Minnesota GI Bill. The proposed legislation would allow veterans to use their GI Bill funds for such things as school applications, exams, licensing and other certifications. At present, money can only be used for tuition at higher education institutions.

- A bill that would allow veterans with 100 percent service-connected disabilities to have free tuition at Minnesota state colleges and universities.

- A law that would allow veterans with 50 percent serv-

ice-connected disability to to get free hunting and small game licenses and lifetime fishing licenses. At the present time, the threshold is 100 percent disability.

- A bill that would extend the eight-year homestead property tax exemption to a permanent exemption for widows of veterans, if the veteran was eligible at the time of his or her death.

- A change that would eliminate taxes on military pensions in Minnesota. The veterans service organizations have been pursuing this legislation for several years. It is hoped

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## Wolfsteller chosen as new state DSO

Jeremy Wolfsteller, who had been serving as the acting Department Service Officer, was hired as the permanent DSO in January.

He will replace Tom Newman, who resigned last year to take a position with the federal Department of Veterans Affairs at the regional office in St. Paul.

Wolfsteller, 37, who had served as assistant DSO for six years under Newman, was hired by the Minnesota's American Legion's Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Committee and endorsed by Department Adjutant Randy Tesdahl.

He is an OEF/OIF veteran serv-

ing in the Army with two tours in Iraq. On his second tour, he was wounded in combat and is medically retired from the Army.

A native of Hopkins, he came back to Minnesota and took a position with the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development helping veterans seek employment after their time in service.

"His love to serve veterans was amplified to a broader level when he was recruited to work for The American Legion," Tesdahl said. "During that time he has been recognized at all levels for his work with veterans at the VA Medical Center as well as the outstate work

he has accomplished."

Wolfsteller will continue to office primarily at the medical center in order to have more contact with the veterans he serves.

"Jeremy has experience in the role and has created long-lasting professional relationships through the Minnesota veterans service network and also in the national VA&R arena," Tesdahl said.

At this time the Department VA&R Committee and the adjutant are recruiting for an administrative person to take over Wolfsteller's old position. The new job will be different, however, with three-fourths of the time

Continued on Page 2



JEREMY WOLFSTELLER

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**Wisconsin law will provide burials**

Continued from Page 1

Tom Ludka was instrumental in helping with the legislation, and Department Vice Commander Cooper "has really picked up the torch on this effort," Kurtz said.

Cooper, a member of Post 80 in New Richmond, said he couldn't get the Sund story out of his head. He formed a committee tasked with seeing if there were any other veterans' remains in similar situations in Wisconsin's District 10.

Finding three, Cooper then expanded his search to the rest of the state, reaching out to more than 650 funeral homes. More than 40 such remains have been found. "I know there are more," Cooper said. "There are a couple funeral home directors who have just started going through their records, or their records are in really bad shape."

Of the remains that have been located, their situation usually falls into three categories, Cooper said: 25 percent have no known next of kin, 25 percent's families have been unresponsive, and 50 percent have families who are happy to have the Legion help.

"To me, these guys are as important as POWs or MIAs," Cooper said of the veterans' remains. "They just happen to be on American soil. Everyone deserves a final resting place. These happen to be veterans who deserve full military honors. I'm going to make damn sure they get it."


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**Task Force sets legislative goals**

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the legislation will encourage more military retirees to make their permanent home in Minnesota.

— A change in the law that would remove the Guardianship language from the state MDVA commissioner's duties. The program is no longer in effect.

— A law that would create a disclosure statement and waiver language for veterans who are seeking benefits through private, for-profit providers. The statement would include acknowledgement by the veteran that these services and advocacy are offered at no-cost by Veterans Service Organizations and County Veterans Service Officers.

Members of the task force include the Minnesota American Legion, The American Ex-POWs, AMVETS, Disabled American Veterans, Jewish War Veterans, Marine Corps League, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and the Vietnam Veterans of America. The members of the task force must agree on a legislative proposal unanimously in order for the task force to support it.

The chairman of the Commander's Task Force is Gregory Remus of the DAV. The vice chair is Jim Kellogg of The American Legion.

**Wolfsteller will be new Minnesota DSO**

Continued from Page 1

being spent as an administrator for the DSO, and one-fourth of the time as an administrative assistant for the Department.

"Jeremy will do a great job in this position," Tesdahl said. "He has experience and is well respected within the veterans services community. Whether it's the federal or state level, claims and benefits, the veterans homes, County Veteran Service Officers, homelessness or the veterans court system, he has a solid working relationship with the leadership in each area. I'm proud to have him as part of our staff."

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# Endorsements

## Skillestad endorsed for V-Cdr.

Richard Skillestad has been endorsed by the Eyota Post 551 for Department Vice Commander for the 1st and 3rd Districts for the Legion year 2016-17.

He has served the Eyota Post 551 as Commander, 1st Vice Commander, 2nd Vice, Chaplain, Service Officer, Legion baseball coach. He is currently the Service Officer, Color Guard member and serves on the Executive Board. In addition, he has held the office of Olmsted County Commander and Chaplain.

At the district level, he has been Commander, 1st Vice Commander, Chaplain, Historian, and

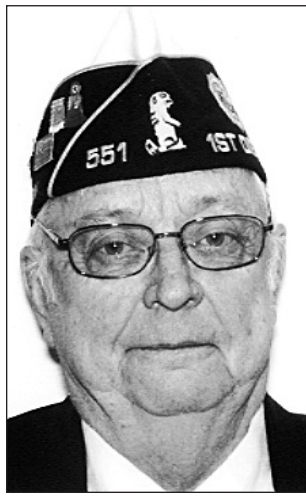
Law & Order Chairman. He is currently the Historian.

At the Department level has been Blood Chairman and served on the Executive Board.

He is a member of the 40 & 8 Voiture 327, Life member of DAV, Sons of Norway. Richard has been a Legion member for 38 years.

Richard military experience was in the US Army from 1966 - 1968 stationed in West Germany as a member of the 3rd Cavalry.

Richard was married to the late Lavonne Skillestad for 50 years. He is currently retired from US Postal Service after 33 years.



RICHARD SKILLESTAD

## VA makes several changes to Veterans Choice Program

WASHINGTON – The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has announced a number of changes to make participation in the Veterans Choice Program easier and more convenient for Veterans who need to use it. The move, which streamlines eligibility requirements, follows feedback from Veterans along with organizations working on their behalf.

“As we implement the Veterans Choice Program, we are learning from our stakeholders what works and what needs to be refined,” said VA Secretary Robert A. McDonald. “It is our goal to do all that we can to remove barriers that separate Veterans from the care they deserve.” To date, more than 400,000 medical appointments have been scheduled since the Veterans Choice Program went into effect on November 5, 2014.

Under the old policy, a Veteran was eligible for the Veterans Choice Program if he or she met the following criteria:

- Enrolled in VA health care by 8/1/14 or able to enroll as a combat Veteran to be eligible for the Veterans Choice Program;
- Experienced unusual or excessive burden eligibility determined by geographical challenges, environmental factors or a medical condition impacting the Veteran’s ability to travel;
- Determined eligible based on the Veteran’s current residence being more than 40 miles driving distance from the closest VA medical facility.

Under the updated eligibility require-

ments, a Veteran is eligible for the Veterans Choice Program if he or she is enrolled in the VA health care system and meets at least one of the following criteria:

- Told by his or her local VA medical facility that they will not be able to schedule an appointment for care within 30 days of the date the Veteran’s physician determines he/she needs to be seen or within 30 days of the date the Veteran wishes to be seen if there is no specific date from his or her physician;
- Lives more than 40 miles driving distance from the closest VA medical facility with a full-time primary care physician;
- Needs to travel by air, boat or ferry to the VA medical facility closest to his/her home;
- Faces an unusual or excessive burden in traveling to the closest VA medical facility based on geographic challenges, environmental factors, a medical condition, the nature or simplicity or frequency of the care needed and whether an attendant is needed. Staff at the Veteran’s local VA medical facility will work with him or her to determine if the Veteran is eligible for any of these reasons; or

Veterans seeking to use the Veterans Choice Program or wanting to know more about it, can call 1-866-606-8198 to confirm their eligibility and to schedule an appointment. For more details about the Veterans Choice Program and VA’s progress, visit: [www.va.gov/opa/choiceact](http://www.va.gov/opa/choiceact).

## Camp Lejeune benefits expanded

WASHINGTON – The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has announced that it plans to propose expanded disability compensation eligibility for Veterans exposed to contaminated drinking water while assigned to Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune.

From 1953 to 1987, water sources at the base were contaminated with industrial solvents that are correlated with certain health conditions. Secretary of Veterans Affairs Robert A. McDonald decided to propose presumptions of service connection for certain conditions associated with these chemical solvents following discussions between environmental health experts at the Veterans Health Administration and the Department of Health and Human Services Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR).

“The water at Camp Lejeune was a hidden hazard, and it is only years later that we know how dangerous it was,” said Secretary McDonald. “We thank ATSDR for the thorough review that provided much of the evidence we needed to fully compensate Veterans who develop one of the conditions known to be related to expo-

sure to the compounds in the drinking water.”

ATSDR determined that the drinking water at Camp Lejeune was contaminated with perchloroethylene, trichloroethylene, vinyl chloride, benzene and other petroleum contaminants from leaking storage tanks from 1953 to 1987. ATSDR also determined that prolonged exposure to these chemicals increases the risk of certain health conditions.

Based upon VA’s review of current medical science and ATSDR’s findings, Secretary McDonald intends to propose creation of a presumption of service connection for the following conditions:

- Kidney Cancer
- Liver Cancer
- Non-Hodgkin Lymphoma
- Leukemia
- Multiple Myeloma
- Scleroderma
- Parkinson’s Disease
- Aplastic Anemia / Myelodysplastic Syndromes

More information can be found at: <http://www.clfamilymembers.fsc.va.gov>



## 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, Roger
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

## National Commander will visit 12 posts across Minnesota

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



NC DALE BARNETT

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

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'S COLUMN**

**By Jim Kellogg**



Greetings fellow Legionnaires.

Congratulations, you have done it. You have made history. For the first time in recent memory our Department is ahead of the previous year in membership. Your hard work has paid off. We now have the last 10 percent to renew or recruit. As we farmers say, "Don't take the plow out of the ground yet we need to finish the field." We can do this working together. One way to get it done is the old divide and conquer theory. If we each look at our non-renewal list at our post and divide up the list the task becomes much easier. Don't let the membership program be one person's job. Together we can make it happen.

We have reached the half way point in our Legion year. It is time to reflect back on our goals we set at the beginning of the year. How are we doing? What can we do to achieve the goals we set? I have attended some of your Mid-Winter District meetings. I must commend you on the way they have been organized and the new ideas I have seen you implement. Change can create new interest and bring out new ideas. As an old 4-H member, I am reminded of one of their sayings: Strive to Make the Best Better.

This is the time of year to look for new leadership for the coming year. Encourage new leadership in your post at all offices. Become mentors and share the knowledge you have. I believe that you can feel you have done a good job with an office when you have helped your successor to do a better job than you did. We all learn from our past, we need to share the knowledge we have gained.

The age of technology is upon us. Some of us have adapted well and some need coaching. As we move forward in this new and fast changing age, communication has changed and taken on new forms. One that I have seen most successful is our newsletters. Our postal system has become consolidated and that has caused more delays in delivery. Electronic news letters are being used more and have found to be successful. The news we send out is more current and can reach more members at much less cost. If you find members who need help learning how to use this new technology please take time to help them.

How often when we visit our local VAMC do we take the time to say thank you to the employees? We have become

very good at thanking fellow veterans for their service, but how about those who serve us? We as veterans know that medical service is a right we have earned and not a benefit as some think it is. But those employees that provide the service are the most dedicated that I have seen at any medical service I have used. These employees are often working for less wages and more hours than their counterparts at private practices. Please take the time to just say thanks on your next visit. You may be surprised at the response.

Reporting time is here. Your post will soon be receiving the forms from Department. Again reporting is everyone's job. Our numbers do count. If you gave blood this past year tell your post commander. If you volunteered at a school or nursing home, tell your post commander. If you visited a veteran at a hospital tell your post commander. All of these hours need to be reported. Our Legislature and Congress are about to convene for another session. When we lobby for our concerns, these reported numbers are significant. By reporting your time you become part of a group that is more recognized and can help make change for the better for all our fellow veterans.

We are once again touring around Minnesota with our National Commander. Each year we try to reach out to different posts to host this and other Department events. I often hear, "Why not our post?" If your post is interested in hosting an event, send a letter to our Department letting them know. Planning for the coming year will soon begin and your input will make the job much easier. There are some requirements for certain events and Department can share them with you. I want to thank all of you who have hosted events this year. Your generosity and hospitality are much appreciated.

My Commander's project is with the American Legion Family Brain Science Research Foundation. I am trying to raise funds to establish a grant for research aimed at pain and brain function. Many of our veterans suffer from chronic pain. This study would help to better understand the relationship between pain and brain activity so therapy can become more effective and rely less on medication. I want to thank the posts who have made donations and encourage those who have not to please consider making one. Together we can make lives better for all veterans.

Congratulations to Jeremy Wolfsteller on his new position as Department Service Officer. He has done a great job as the Assistant DSO for many years, and he will continue to do a great job for veterans in Minnesota.

I once again would like to remind you to seek out candidates for Boys and Girls State. Plan a visit to your local armories and let them know we as Legion Members do care. Continue to spread the word about who we are and what we stand for. Take time to enjoy this great Minnesota winter. Listen to Minnesota Military radio and tell us what you think of our ads. Be safe in your travels. I look forward to seeing many of you in the next few months and may God bless.

**Chaplain's Corner**

**By Richard Wog**



A story of our youth today. There is so much going on around our youth today. I want to share this with you because I know you will know what I'm talking about. I'm sure that sometime it has happened to you. Cheryl and I went to our son Troy's home. They live in Canton, South Dakota. It was the week before Christmas and we were sitting at the kitchen table talking. I was sitting next to our three year old Granddaughter Josie. She was playing with Playdough and I really do not know what she was making, but I told her it looked very nice. She looked at me, smiled and passed some Playdough to me and said I could have some and to make something. Believe me I tried, but it didn't look much different than hers. As the morning wore on the rest of the family moved to another room. It was just Josie and me still in the kitchen so we played on. Then out of the blue she looked up at me with her blue eyes and said, "Grandpa, sharing is caring you know." That just made me melt. She is right, sharing IS caring. That, as we all know, is such an important part of the four pillars. It is not just about money. It's giving of your time and talents to those that need it. Some even give their lives.

Such is the story of the four chaplains. They were on the troop ship the U.S.A. Dorchester. The ship departed from New York on January 23rd with approximately 900 soldiers on board. The captain was alerted by their escort ships that sonar had picked up a submarine. The ships' captain told the men to sleep in their clothing and keep their life jackets on. Many of the soldiers sleeping in the ships hold disregarded the order because of the engines heat. Others ignored it because the life jackets were uncomfortable. During the early morning hours of February 3, 1943 at 12:15 am the vessel was torpedoed off Newfoundland in the North Atlantic. The torpedo knocked out the electrical system leaving the ship dark. The men panicked, many of them trapped below the decks. The chaplains sought to calm the men and organize an orderly evacuation and help guide the wounded men to safety. As the life jackets were being passed out, the supply ran out. The chaplains removed their own life jackets and gave them to others. They did what they could and then linked arms saying prayers and singing hymns as they went down with the ship.

They were all new chaplains, all held the rank of First Lieutenant. They included Methodist minister Reverend George L. Fox, Reform-Rabbi Alexander D Goode (Ph.D.), Pastor of the First Reformed Church Clark V. Poling and Roman Catholic Priest John P. Washington. Their backgrounds, personalities and denominations were different, although Goode, Poling and Washington had all served as leaders in the Boy Scouts of America. They met at the Army Chaplains School at Harvard University where they prepared for their assignments in the European theater. Of the 902 men aboard the U.S.A. Dorchester 672 died, leaving 230 survivors. The nation was stunned by the magnitude of the tragedy and the heroic conduct of the four chaplains.

There is so much more to this story, but the sacrifice these four chaplains made for those soldiers show the compassion and love for their fellow man and their God. "Valor is a gift," Carl Sandburg once said, "those having it never know for sure whether they have it until the test comes."

**Mail Call**

**VA Care**  
**To the Editor:**

I would like to address Marland and Chris Ronning's public thank you which addressed the quality by-pass he recieved at the Minneapolis VA Medical Center.

What is your secret? I have three teeth needing to be pulled. A private sector emergency room says I need to have them pulled before they become infected. I'm 100 percent service-connected.

Here's my history. I was first turned away in 1972, and since have been transferred from the Brainerd clinic to the St. Cloud VA Medical Center. In 1972, I started losing my legs and I had to buy my first Hoveround and still use it because my handicapped house was built around it. The St. Cloud VA provided me with a wheelchair, a Permobil for outdoor use. It was great, but after seven years, it stopped working. The Minneapolis VA Medical Center where I transferred to refuses to professionally replace it. Instead, they took it in to replace or fix. Since it was seven years old, they refused to repair or fix, and they told me their way or no way. This is what we can do for you. It's a brand new piece of junk. No Hoveround.

Then you contact your senators who can't do anything. The Minneapolis VA director says speak to this person, or that person. But let your VA home heath care providers make your phone calls to me. To the senator: it has to meet the legislative requirements -- your requirements.

Been in home health care since Brainerd, but I was refused compensation for Home Bound. Even a Social Security doctor physical was dismissed by the VA Medical Center for Home Bound compensation.

I could write 20-30 more pages of my experiences. Some were good. I'm still alive. Thank you.

**Robert Mellema**  
**Aitkin**

**American Legion Riders**

**By Craig Knutson**  
**Director, Chapter 7**



Happy New Year from the 7th District ALR. We are the ones way out here in the western boonies, and up until last year, Post 59 of Montevideo was the only Chapter in the district. We are happy to welcome Post 545 of Spicer as they continue to build their new group. Gary Davenport, the groups new director reports the membership at a confirmed 6, with a potential of another 8-10 members coming on board soon. They meet at the Spicer Legion on the 4th Tuesday of the month at 1800 hours.

The Montevideo group of Post 59 has scheduled their ride for Saturday, July 16. KSU at 1000 hours heading east with a stop in Cosmos, then touring up around the lakes, with a stop in Spicer before heading back home for some pulled pork sammy's. Post 59 is comprised of 55 members from many different directions in a four-county area. We meet on the second Saturday of the month at 1500 hours at the Montevideo Legion. We have an all you care to eat taco bar on the second Thursday of the month also at the Montevideo Legion, starting at 5:30 p.m. and serving until 7 p.m.

The 7th District rally will be held in Cosmos, on January, 16. Karen Welander, the 7th District commander, has asked the ALR to give a presentation on the Legacy run. We have invited Sully to come and make this presentation.

On February 13 we will be doing a service of parking and security for the Ice Castles fishing tournament on Lac Qui Parle Lake. This is also the date of the drawing for the winners of the ALR Post 59 Hard Water raffle.

Over the last 5 years ALR Post 59 has donated more than \$10,000 to help Veterans and Veterans organizations in our area, as well as contributing to our community and various charities serving this area. We also continue to volunteer

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 96th 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@mnlegion.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 Locker, Fridley; Clinton Burt, Slayton; Joe Bayer, Minneapolis; Pat Logan, Bloomington; Virgil Persing, Columbia Heights; Sandy Fredrickson, Glenville, Carol Kottom, Buffalo.

# What's Happening

## Flea Market

There will be an antique sale/flea market at the North St. Paul Post 39 on Saturday, Feb. 20, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Bake sale and food will be available. For more info, call Betty at 651-777-5552. All proceeds go to support the work of the Auxiliary.

## Valentine's Day Breakfast

Apple Valley Unit 1776 will have a Valentine's Day Omelet Breakfast and Bake Sale on Sunday, Feb. 14, from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. Tickets are \$10 for adults and \$5 for children under 9. Omelets will be made to order and will be served with hash browns, toast, fruit cups, milk and coffee. Bring your sweetheart.

## Tree Seedlings

Orders for tree seedlings are now being accepted through the Conservation Committee. Order forms have been mailed to all posts and are available for downloading from the state Legion website: [mnlegion.org](http://mnlegion.org). Click on "post resources" then "Energy and Conservation Tree Order Form."

There is a new seedling supplier this year and a larger variety of species are available. Deadline is March 31. For more information, contact Carl Hendrickson at 218-393-0079.

## Richfield Casino Trip

Richfield Post 435 is sponsoring a bus trip to Prairie's Edge Casino in Granite Falls on March 6-7. The cost is \$89 for a double or \$109 for a single and includes motor coach transportation, overnight accommodations, admission to the Fagen's Fighters World War II Museum, and \$25 slot play both the first and second day.

Call Sherry Morris for reservations: 612-861-2589. Deadline is Feb. 29.

# Taps

**Wiener, Lawrence D.**, 59, Army veteran of the Vietnam War, died Jan. 13, 2016. He was retired from the National Guard, 34th Division. He was a member of the color guard and a First Vice Commander of St. Joseph Post 328.

**Ziemer, Brian M.**, 70, Army veteran of the Vietnam War, died Dec. 9, 2016. He served in Germany. He was a past commander of Elysian Post 311.

**Robson, William**, 90, Army veteran of World War II, died Dec. 18, 2016. He served in the Philippines. He was a member of Thief River Falls Post 117.

**Schnettler, Jerome L.**, 83, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Dec. 24, 2015. He served in a MASH unit as part of the 21st Station Hospital. He was a past 6th District vice commander. He was a past adjutant of Clarissa Post 213.

**Sollie, Orlie N.B.**, 84, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Dec. 17, 2015. He served 26 months in Okinawa. He was a member of Winger Post 200.

**Matteson, Harold G.**, 83, Navy veteran of the Korean War, died Dec. 20, 2015. He was a member of Lakefield Post 4.

**Taylor, Ralph L.**, 81, Marine Corps veteran of the Vietnam War, died Dec. 14, 2015. He attained the rank of major. He was a member of New Prague Post 45.

**Benes, Dennis L.**, 66, Army veteran of the Vietnam War, died Dec. 21, 2015. He was a member of Windom Post 206.

**Gehrke, Norman**, 77, Army National Guard veteran of the Vietnam War, died Dec. 26, 2015. He was a member of Brownston Post 143.

**Theis, Alan Anthony**, 85, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Dec. 23, 2015. He was stationed in Germany. He served on the honor guard of Monticello Post 260.

**Feil, David M.**, 82, Air Force veteran of the Korean War, died Dec. 22, 2015. He served in Japan. He was a member of Park Rapids Post 212.

**Guadalupe, Fierro**, 77, Air Force veteran of the Vietnam War, died Dec. 22, 2015. He was a member of North Branch Post 85.

**Wolling, Roger A.**, 81, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Dec. 25, 2015. He was a member of Fairfax Post 205.

**Weikle, Raymond**, 86, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Dec. 27, 2015. He was a member of Fairfax Post 205.

**Anderson, L. DeWayne "Duddy"**, 88, Navy veteran of World War II and the Korean War, died Dec. 23, 2015. He also served in the National Guard during the Vietnam War. He served for 42 years and retired as a sergeant first class. He was a member of Lowry Post 253.

**Koubsky, Joseph F.**, 87, Army veteran of World War II, died Dec. 27, 2015. He served in Japan. He was a member of Lowry Post 253.

**Nelson, Douglas R.**, 86, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Dec. 15, 2015. He served in an army construction battalion in Korea. He was a past commander and adjutant

## USO Dinner and Dance

Rosemount Unit 65 and Apple Valley Riders 1776 are sponsoring a USO Dinner and Dance on Saturday, Feb. 20, at Bogart's in Apple Valley. It will be held from 5-11 p.m. and tickets are \$35 with limited seating.

There will be a social hour at 5 p.m., dinner at 6 and dance at 8. Entertainment will be by the 34th Division "Red Bull" Jazz Band. 1940s attire is welcome. For tickets call the Rosemount Post at 651-423-3380 or call Jackie at 651-343-4597. The event is a fundraiser for veterans.

## Career Fair, Minneapolis

The Minnesota Veterans Home at Minneapolis will be holding a Career Fair on Wednesday, Feb. 17 (noon-4 p.m.), Thursday, Feb. 18 (3-7 p.m.), and Saturday, Feb. 20 (11 a.m. to 3 p.m.) at the home, 5101 Minnehaha Ave. S., Minneapolis.

Full and part-time opportunities are available for all shifts for certified nursing assistants, human service technicians and licenced practical nurses. Attendees can tour the facility and learn about state employment. Please bring work history and references. Potential employees can also apply online at [www.mn.gov/careers](http://www.mn.gov/careers).

## Round Tables

The World War II History Round Table will meet at Fort Snelling Visitor Center on Thursday, Feb. 11, at 7 p.m. The theme will be "Liberation of German Concentration Camps." Author John McManus will be the speaker and veterans of camps and of liberators of the camps will talk. Donation is \$5.

The Veterans' Roundtable in Rochester will feature "Always Prepared: the U.S. Coast Guard in World War II" with speaker Tom Ostrom. The program will be at 7 p.m. at Autumn Ridge Church. Donation is \$5.

of Bruno Post 563 and helped in the post's reorganization.

**Wilson, Darrell G.**, 60, Army veteran of the Vietnam War, died Dec. 24, 2015. He served in Korea. He was a member of Millville Post 579.

**Tschann, Robert L.**, 76, Army veteran of the Vietnam War, died Jan. 7, 2016. He was a member of Paynesville Post 271.

**Lohse, Donald G.**, 91, Navy veteran of World War II, died Dec. 24, 2015. He was a member of Waseca Post 228.

**Petre, Myren**, 81, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Dec. 20, 2015. He was a baker in the Army. He was a member of Long Prairie Post 12.

**Hoffman, Glen D.**, 91, Army veteran of World War II, died Dec. 26, 2015. He served in Germany and France. He was a member of Redwood Falls Post 38.

**Hagert, Bernard M.**, 86, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Dec. 10, 2015. He was a member of Redwood Falls Post 38.

**Castner, Stephen**, 71, Air Force veteran of the Vietnam War, died Jan. 6, 2016. He was a past club accountant at Red Wing Post 54.

**Carlson, Leonard "Boomer"**, 90, Army veteran of World War II, died Jan. 7, 2016. He was a member of Red Wing Post 54.

**Jansen, John**, 88, Army veteran of World War II, died Jan. 10, 2016. He was a member of Red Wing Post 54.

**Neigebauer, Robert William**, 85, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Dec. 31, 2015. He was a member of Waseca Post 228.

**Hill, Reino Michael**, 87, Navy veteran of the Korean War, died Jan. 6, 2016. He was a member of Chisholm Post 247.

**Buckingham, Layne Paul**, 85, Air Force veteran of the Korean War, died Jan. 3, 2016. He was a fire fighter and stationed in Alaska. He was a member of Kenyon Post 78.

**Bjelland, Richard A.**, 86, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Jan. 3, 2016. He was a member of Albert Lea Post 56.

**Stenzel, Robert D.**, 86, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Jan. 3, 2016. He was a post manager and member of the honor guard of Blue Earth Post 89.

**Dingmann, Richard**, 88, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Jan. 13, 2016. He was a member of Cold Spring Post 455.

**Sorvari, Gerald Leonard**, 68, Army veteran of the Vietnam War, died Jan. 11, 2016. He later served in the National Guard. He was a member of Little Falls Post 46.

**Perreault, Leo A.**, 91, Army veteran of World War II, died Jan. 16, 2016. He was a member of Morris Post 29.

**Jelley, Donald W.**, 84, Air Force veteran of the Korean War, died Jan. 15, 2016. He was a member of Willmar Post 167.

**Hatz, Robert R.**, 85, Air Force and Air National Guard

The St. Croix Valley Civil War Roundtable will have "Civil War Cavalry: An Overview" with speaker Richard Resseman on Monday, Feb. 22, at the Lowell Inn in Stillwater. This is a dinner meeting. For information call Steve Anderson at 715-386-1268.

## Round Table Trip

The World War II History Round Table is organizing a trip to study the D-Day invasion in Southern France. The trip leaves May 24 and includes a full itinerary including military historians over 14 days. Stops include the landing beaches, drops zones, Avignon, Roman and Greek sites, Lyon, and more. For more information, call Don Patton at 612-867-5144.

## Flag Cases available

Memorial Flag Cases, homemade from oak, ash or pine, are available free of charge for families of veterans receiving a memorial flag. For more information, call Jim Kempenich in Baudette, 218-634-1260.

## Golf Jobs

Interlachen Country Club is still hiring veterans for part-time positions this year. Applications are at [www.interlachencc.org](http://www.interlachencc.org).

## Legionville Fishing Contest

The Legionville Ice Fishing Derby will be held Saturday, Feb. 6, on Legionville Bay, North Long Lake, at Brainerd. Only 125 holes will be drilled, with a \$20 per hole fee, two hole maximum. The contest will go from noon to 2 p.m.

There will be prizes and drawings throughout the contest and it will be followed by a Chili Feed at 3 and by the Sweetheart Rally at 4.

veteran of the Korean War, died Jan. 1, 2016. He was retired from the National Guard. He was a member of Glencoe Post 95.

**Rogness, Freeman O. "Dean,"** 90, Army veteran of World War II, died Jan. 9, 2016. He was a member of Albert Lea Post 56.

**Chlan, Emil**, 85, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Jan. 9, 2016. He was a member of the honor guard and a past commander of New Prague Post 45.

**Wagner, Wilfred A.**, 90, Army veteran of World War II, died Jan. 11, 2016. He was a member of New Prague Post 45.

**Thompson, Orland Jay "OT,"** 82, Air Force veteran of the Korean War. He was an aircraft mechanic and served in Korea. He died Dec. 18, 2015. He was a member of Alexandria Post 87.

**Klingler, Edward**, 68, Marine Corps veteran of the Vietnam War, died Dec. 23, 2015. He was a member of Princeton Post 216.

**Hamann, Donald O.**, 92, Navy veteran of World War II, died Jan. 5, 2016. He was a fireman second class. He was a member of the color guard and past commander of Princeton Post 216.

**Kiesler, Calvin**, 91, Army Air Corps veteran of World War II, died Jan. 4, 2016. He later served in the Air Force Reserve, retiring in 1985. He was a member of Waseca Post 228.

**Lynch, Robert James**, 86, Navy veteran of the Korean War, died Jan. 5, 2016. He was an honor guard member of Waseca Post 228.

**Muchow, Milo**, 76, Army veteran of the Vietnam War, died Jan. 13, 2016. He served on the honor guard of Gaylord Post 433.

**Prax, Robert E.**, 87, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Jan. 17, 2016. He was a member of Fairfax Post 205.

**Prihoda, Roy L.**, 82, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Dec. 23, 2015. He was a member of Pine City Post 51.

**Johnson, Walter**, 84, National Guard veteran of the Korean War, died Jan. 11, 2016. He was a member of Pine City Post 51.

**Wesenberg, Michael F.**, 65, Navy veteran of the Vietnam War, died Jan. 14, 2016. He was a member of Sauk Rapids Post 254.

**Fuchs, Deane Arden**, 78, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Jan. 7, 2016. He served with the 175th Armored Infantry. He was a member of Pine Island Post 184.

**Editor's Note:** When submitting obituaries, please include the full name, age, what military branch the veteran served in, the war era, exact date of death, and information about the veteran's service, valor medals and his or her service to their post.

## Sons of The American Legion

By Gene Olswold



As I sit here late in the afternoon, I see on my thermometer, we are having a Minnesota “heatwave”. It is plus 2 outside and calm winds which is much different than yesterday at this same time. What a difference a day makes. Now the forecast is to be above freezing by Saturday. Only in Minnesota.

I have been on the road these past few weekends attending the District Mid-Winter Conferences around the state. Districts sometimes hold the Mid-Winters on the same Saturday and because of the distance between the two of them, I am just unable to attend. I attend everyone I possibly can. The hospitality extended to me at the Mid-Winters I have attended has been exceptionally warm and very much welcomed. They have gone to a joint conference of The American Legion Family which has gone very well and one I am glad to see.

Membership in the Detachment of Minnesota continues to be strong and we are exceeding National goals without much effort. This shows me the dedication and strong support of all our membership here in Minnesota for The Legion Family and all the programs they support. New squadrons are being chartered with two new ones already in place in this membership year and 2 additional posts have submitted paperwork for a charter within their posts to have a Sons of The American Legion squadron. I am aware of other American Legion Posts who are considering starting a squadron. This is all GREAT NEWS showing the want of a squadron with the posts.

How many have visited our Detachment website? If you haven't, you are missing a lot of valuable information and Al Amundson our Media Chairman does a great job trying to keep it updated with the latest in forms, and educational materials which are available. Go to mnsal.org and start surfing for what you may want in forms which are all printable and some are even “fill-in” PDF Forms. Your Squadron might even want to learn more of the 5-Star Program or other programs for your squadron. We have many youth in our squadrons so make your monthly meetings an educational one for them while you conduct your business meetings. We need to get our youth more involved at our meetings and this is a great way of doing it. What is it? Go to the site and check it out.

The Department is having a Sweetheart Rally on Saturday the 6th of February at Legionville. Along with this there will be a fishing contest and a “Chili Cook-Off”. I would like to see many SAL Bluecappers there. You will enjoy the day.

As you travel the roads this winter, please drive safe and remember, in your prayers, all our troops abroad who travel every day in Harms Way for their safe return home.

## Baseball registration open

Team registration for the 2016 American Legion Baseball season is available online at [www.baseball.legion.org](http://www.baseball.legion.org).

Any team that fails to register by May 15 shall pay an additional \$200 to their respective American Legion department. And any team that fails to register by June 1 will not be permitted to play during the season.

Coaches can use the same username and password from last year, and they can locate and renew teams and players from previous seasons. The registration site also meets the Legion's policy for background screening checks.



## Legion posts encouraged to promote voting

As 2016 ushers in presidential and congressional elections, American Legion posts are encouraged to promote “Get Out the Vote” (GOTV) efforts while remaining non-partisan in the process.

The Legion's “Get Out the Vote” brochure provides ideas on how posts can participate in and promote the electoral process in an effort to motivate U.S. citizens of legal age to exercise their right to vote.

Legionnaires can serve as poll volunteers, host or participate in nonpartisan candidate forums, place public service announcements in local media that promote registration and voting, distribute GOTV promotional materials and more.

During GOTV promotional efforts, it is imperative to remember that The American Legion is nonpartisan and will not be used for the dissemination of partisan principles nor for the promotion of any candidate or party.

For example, when a Legion post hosts or sponsors a candidate forum or debate, it must be open to the public and all candidates must be invited.

Any impression of endorsement or support must be avoided. Individual Legion members may support candidates of their choosing. However, Legionnaires engaged in partisan activities - such as attending a candidate's rally - should do so without wearing the Legion cap or other Legion attire.

“It's an exciting time for our nation as we prepare to elect our 45th president,” said Richard Anderson, chairman of the Legion's National Americanism Commission. “And as Legionnaires, it is our duty to demonstrate 100 percent Americanism and commitment for continued service to this country by being politically active as individuals.

But politics and elections can easily stir the emotions and passions of even the most passive people among us. For this reason, as posts begin their Get Out the Vote efforts, they must be ever-vigilant in following the rules of nonpartisanism.”

Start planning GOTV efforts now by downloading the Legion's “Get Out the Vote” and “Vote, America” brochures. For sample GOTV public service announcements and news releases, visit [www.legion.org/vote](http://www.legion.org/vote).

“As you head to the polls, and encourage others to do the same, remember that our government is ‘of the people, by the people and for the people’ and our democratic republic can only function when we the people participate,” Anderson said.

“With a successful GOTV campaign, Legionnaires can make a difference in voter turnout.”

## Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

By Ronald D. Quade II



### Four Corners of Service

Your American Legion (AL) Claims Divisions have a wide variety of services available to all four corners of the State. My last segment welcomed you to the Claims Divisions, this month you will learn more about each and in future segments you will hear from the Divisions themselves.

AL Field Operations Division is a mobile unit centered out of St. Cloud Veteran Affairs Medical Center and supervised by James Miller. MDVA currently employs twelve Claims and Sr. Claims Representatives in the Division. Field Operations work in Native American Reservations, VA Medical Centers in St. Cloud and Minneapolis, Federal Veteran Centers, homeless shelters, in support of County Veteran Service Offices and anywhere else assistance is required. Field Operations Division is also authorized to recommend State Soldiers Assistance Applications, a wonderful State of Minnesota Veterans and Dependent program.

The St. Paul Claims Division is located at the Bishop Henry Whipple building in St. Paul (Ft. Snelling). St. Paul staff receive a high volume of submittals (normally 150 – 200) in new claims and supporting documents to existing claims on a daily basis. Claims Staff work hard to represent Claimants in the development of claims specializing in VA appeals. St. Paul Claims Division is supervised by Rolando Sotolongo and staffed by twelve Claims and Sr. Claims Representatives and five Office Administrative Staff.

Like in St. Paul, the Fargo Claims Division develops claims and appeals while personally representing our Minnesota Claimants. Fargo is unique as it is located outside the State in North Dakota, collocated with the North Dakota Regional Office. The Division serves the northwest sector of Minnesota, and is staffed by two Senior Claims Representatives, an Administrative Staff and Supervised by Jeff Burth.

Special services now include Women Veteran program and Gold Star Families program both coordinated by Ashley Laganieri, who has worked hard to rejuvenate both programs and provide program oriented and interesting events throughout the state in a town near you. Please check out our events in 2016.

Four excellent AL Claims Divisions providing specialty service to the four corners to the great State of Minnesota. Please contact your local County Veteran Service Office to discuss or contact us directly at 612 970 5662. I look forward to bringing you more information about the Claims Divisions directly from the Supervisors and Staff who are on the ground working hard for you every day.

## Legion membership doing well this year

American Legion National Commander Dale Barnett was happy to announce to members of the Legion's National Membership & Post Activities Committee on Jan. 8 that 36 Legion departments are either at or above the 80 percent membership target date for January. For the past two years, less than 10 departments had met the January membership goal.

“I'm smiling right now, and hope I continue to smile – there's more green (membership) numbers than red numbers,” Barnett said. “Now we need to focus on finishing the game. We have to be close to that 100 percent (by May) if we are going to grow the organization.”

The dues increase and revitalization efforts are two reasons Barnett believes membership is in the green.

“A dues increase doesn't usually represent growth,” he said, “but with it being implemented in the middle of the membership year it created a focus for the membership team that there was a reason to get out there early and work membership.”

“And with revitalization, I've seen the fruits of those efforts. Not every department has implemented a revitalization effort while others have implemented it extremely well. Where we've done revitalization efforts is where we are seeing membership growth.”

The committee members gathered in Indianapolis to review progress toward the Legion's five-year membership strategic plan, and to discuss ways to grow membership. Young Army Iraq/Afghanistan veteran Edgar Morales of Bryan, Texas, said he joined the Legion when he was introduced and encouraged to participate in Legion programs at the local level.

“We need to promote our programs,” said Morales, a member of Post 159. “If we do our programs and serve our community, we are going to end up serving veterans and those veterans are going to find out who we are and what we stand for. And that's going to bring in our membership.”

# Membership Chart

As of Jan. 20, 2016

District	2016 Goal	Total 2015	Total 2016	Percent of Goal	Same Date '15
1	9,627	9,574	8,841	91.84	8,879
2	7,779	7,705	7,165	92.11	7,203
3	12,165	12,116	11,352	93.32	11,200
4	2,561	2,560	2,337	91.25	2,261
5	2,829	2,788	2,487	87.94	2,513
6	12,485	12,415	11,430	91.55	11,402
7	6,997	6,926	6,324	90.41	6,412
8	4,630	4,593	4,085	88.23	4,139
9	7,332	7,172	6,602	91.29	6,678
10	10,964	10,917	9,916	90.44	9,952
At-large	3,734	2,661	2,434	65.18	2,417
<b>Totals</b>	<b>81,000</b>	<b>79,427</b>	<b>72,973</b>	<b>90.09</b>	<b>73,056</b>

## Executive Committee meeting called

The Department of Minnesota Executive Committee will meet on Saturday, March 5, at 1 p.m. at Legionville.

The meeting will deal with all old and new business coming before the state's American Legion governing organization.

It will be held in conjunction with the membership rally at Legionville later that day.

Legionville is located on North Long Lake, just north of Brainerd.

## World War II History Round Table

# Why did Stalin's troops fight so hard to win?

By Al Zdon

What we call World War II, the Russians call the Great Patriotic War.

And flat-out patriotism was a major factor in why the Soviet Union was able to put 34 million men and women in arms during the war and eventually push the Nazi army back into Germany.

Author Roger Reese, a professor of history at Texas A&M University, told the January meeting of the World War II History Round Table at Fort Snelling that there were many factors that caused the Soviets to fight, but love of the mother country was a key.

Reese said attracting or conscripting men and women into the Red Army was not a given at the onset of war.

"We assume that everybody fights for their country in war, but Hitler's generals were inconclusive." Many onlookers thought Stalin, for a variety of reasons, would have trouble creating and maintaining a strong army.

Part of the reason is the history of the Soviet Union in the years just preceding World War II. Stalin was continuing to try and collectivize agriculture during the 1930s, and it was not a smooth process.

"It was very horrible. The collectivization of agriculture was brutal and the victims were millions of people who died of famine," Reese said as many as five million people "died of starvation caused by the state."

In addition, just before the war and even after Germany invaded the Soviet Union in 1941, Stalin purged the officer ranks of the Red Army. And prior to this, political purges killed over 800,000 in the country.

"The survivors of these episodes were now the ones being called on to fight," Reese said.

So why did they fight, and in such huge numbers? Because Hitler was the lesser of two evil tyrants? Or because they were motivated by fear?

It's complicated, Reese said. First of all, the Soviet Union was made up of many nations that had been conquered or annexed by Stalin's juggernaut. Still the heart of the nation was Russia, and Russians were patriotic.

In 1941, there were four million volunteers for the Red Army. For the most part, Reese said, they were Russian (as opposed to being Ukrainian, Byelorussian, or Turkestani), they were urban, they were communists, and they were single.

"Soviet socialism was working for them. They didn't see it as an evil empire. They had escaped the famine and the purges. Their Soviet Union was a good one."

He said many did have absolute faith in Stalin. "What did they know? Only what the Soviet press told them. Stalin was god-like. They didn't blame Stalin for what went wrong, but instead blamed the local authorities."

But mainly, it was Mother Russia calling them. "Russia has been around for a long time. They fought for the historic image of Russia they had in their minds. It was very powerful."

Others who served in the war later said, "We did not fight for Stalin, we fought for our families and our homes."

There was also the strong feeling that this was a just war, because the Soviet Union had been invaded. "Their cause was just, they had the moral right. If Stalin had started the war, it would have been a whole different situation."

Around the rest of the Soviet Union with its dozens of republics and ethnic groups, recruiting an Army was not so rosy. In all, about 4.5 million young men and women who were drafted did not fight for various reasons.

"Non-Russians were often hostile toward Stalin. There was no love lost on host Russia. They had no intrinsic reason to volunteer. They did not hate the Germans. In many cases they were a conquered people."

In these countries, there was little volunteerism, only conscription. "In the Ukraine, many young men avoided joining the army, and when the Germans took over the country, they simply went home to their families."

In the Balkan states, men were more likely to join the German army than the Red Army.

Still, Reese said that the image of the Red Army carrying on its task through fear and terror is not quite right.

For instance, he said those who had been convicted of desertion or evading the draft, the death penalty was available. Yet only 3.6 percent of those who earned the death penalty for avoiding the army were actually executed.

Reese also discounted the notion that the Soviets fought with a gun to their head, as emphasized by "blocking detachments" and "penal regiments."

The blocking detachments were troops in the rear of the front lines who were armed with machine guns and would supposedly kill any soldier who retreated without orders. In actuality, Reese said that during a period in 1942, "140,000 troops were detained by the blocking detachments, and 130,000 were returned to their units with no punishment."

"It was a myth that guys running from battle would be machine gunned, but Stalin was willing to let them believe it."

Another myth, he said, was that the penal battalions,

which were made up of deserters and others, fought under close supervision, were given the most dangerous assignments and were often used in suicide charges.

In fact, he said, most soldiers only spent a minimum amount of time in a penal battalion and then were sent back to their unit.

In one period of time, 4,000 were arrested for desertion or shirking, and 3,000 went to penal battalions. Almost all went back to their prior army units without punishment. Reese said the goal was to restore a soldier to his unit, not kill him.

Not to say it wasn't harsh, Reese said. The other 1,000 were executed.

During the war, the Red Army lost about 8.7 million in the military (compared to about 250,000 U.S. war dead), but managed to stem the German advance and then roll back the Nazi army all the way to Berlin.

That could not have been accomplished by an army only motivated by fear. Mostly, he said, the Red Army fought because it wanted to. "But there's no one-size-fits-all explanation for who fought and why. But in the end they were able to mobilize enough troops to get the job done."

Reese pointed out that in the opening months of the war, as Hitler drove to the gates of Moscow, the Soviets started with 4.5 million troops in the field. By winter time, the Soviets had lost 4.5 million men, yet they still had 5.7 million men in the field. That's how fast they were mobilizing and creating an army. "All this doesn't explain why the Soviet Union won the war, but it does explain why they didn't lose."

Reese has authored several books about the Soviet Army, including "Why Stalin's Soldier's Fought."

Also on the program were two veterans of the Soviet Army, both from Byelorussia who now live in Minnesota.

Jacob Rabinovich was born in 1921 in a Byelorussian town to a poor Jewish family. He went to military school in 1939 and by 1941 when Germany invaded the Soviet Union, he was about to graduate as a lieutenant.

He was assigned command of a machine gun unit. "The soldiers were good, and for the most part were well trained. But the commanding officers were not that well trained at that time. Very few had any experience thanks to the purges."

The troops gamely defended their front, but Germany's lightning warfare quickly pushed them back to Leningrad where they were encircled. "We prevented them from entering the city," Rabinovich said.

He lost seven of his 22 machine gunners in the early action.

The 900-day siege of Leningrad was very tough, especially the first year, and especially on the civilians trapped in the city. Rabinovich said, however, that the troops on the line had adequate food, clothing and ammunition.

He thanked the United States for much of the supplies that did reach Leningrad through the siege years.

During the siege, he became a chief of reconnaissance, and three times he went on missions behind German lines, mainly to capture German prisoners. The first two missions were successful.

"On the first mission, we found a German asleep in a barn. But we also found a lot of chocolate in the barn. We brought both him and the chocolate back. Yes, of course, I was a hero. I got a medal right away."

On the third mission, the raiding party was discovered.

"We were met by enemy fire, and I was wounded. I had a severe concussion, and I was taken to a hospital. I also got pneumonia. There were no more missions after that." He spent six weeks in the hospital.

In 1943, Rabinovich was part of Soviet effort to recapture a town about 15 miles from Leningrad. "It was defended by a Spanish division that Franco had sent to support Germany. They defended it until more of our troops arrived and we captured it. We never lost it again during the siege and it was important to our operations."

Rabinovich was awarded the Order of the Red Banner, the Soviet army's second-highest award for valor.

Did the soldiers ever consider the war was lost?

"No matter what the trials or the hardship, we never lost faith in the final victory. There were a lot of heroes."

He stayed in the army after the war and had a 37-year career.

Ceman Paley also grew up in Byelorussia and was only 14 years old when Germany invaded.

"Somebody heard about the invasion on the radio. There was fear and people were scared, but right away we had a strong desire to defend the country."

He had been separated from his parents, who lived in Leningrad, and lived with an aunt. During the war, his father was drafted and was killed in action.

"The German troops reached my town, but we crossed over the bridge to join the Soviet forces. Myself and other younger boys were assigned to take care of the wounded. We would bandage wounds and feed them. We were called



Red Army veteran Ceman Paley



Red Army veteran Jacob Rabinovich



Author and speaker Roger Reese

the 'sons of the regiment.' "

Paley recalls that at one point he and his comrades came under heavy fire in a strawberry patch. "It was a horrible time. I saw my friends blown to pieces. Since I survived, I thought I was destined to survive the war."

The Red Army retreated to a "beautiful town," Paley said. "There was a German air raid, and most of the city was destroyed. I could look up and see the sneer on the faces of the German pilots as they bombed the town. That made a very strong impression on a 14-year-old boy."

The army retreated into the Ukraine, and that marked the end of Paley's military career. "The commander took all of us young boys and sent us to a collective farm in the southern Volga region. When my mother got out of Leningrad, she was able to find me at that farm."

At the farm, he learned how to drive a tractor. "I tried to enlist when I turned 15, but I was told that the front needs bread more than anything, and I was sent back to the farm. I always had faith in victory. I never lost it."

After the war, he got degrees from three colleges, and became director of a large school in Byelorussia. He was awarded the Red Banner for Labor, and was elected to the Soviet parliament.

Translators for the evening were Dr. Masha Zavialova, curator of the Museum of Russian Art, and Peter Zharkov, leader of the Russian Veterans Association in Minnesota.

# EIGHT STARS ON THE BANNER

**D**uring World War II, blue star banners were common across America. Families that had a son or daughter serving in the military displayed the red-bordered banner, often home-sewn, in a front window as a symbol of sacrifice, honor and pride.

The Albert and Caroline Stanek Family of Austin, Minnesota, had a blue star banner in their front window during the war. Only their banner was a little different. It had eight stars sewn into it.

**B**ud Stanek grew up in that family of 10 children. By the end of World War II, he and seven of his siblings had served in the military. Of the other two, one sister worked in Washington D.C. in the war effort, and the youngest later served in the Korean War.

Even the family dog, "King Wags" served during the war.

Stanek recalled a happy childhood. "My brothers and I often went hunting to put food on the table."

A family history recounts trips to the Cedar River to fish for bullheads using worms and cane poles, fishing from shore.

Friday night was card games with the family and others trying their hand at 500 or Hearts. Albert had his reserved chair, closest to the refrigerator and the beer. Sundays, after church when Caroline fixed a chicken dinner, card games also were the main occupation.

The Staneks raised cherries, grapes, corn for popping, potatoes and other food in their yard. There were 12 apple trees. Each fall, the family would can between 30 and 40 gallons of sauerkraut.

It's also been said that the family engaged in a little boot-legging during Prohibition.

Bud remembers that after a rainstorm, his sisters would wash their hair in the rain barrel alongside the house, a tradition that became more difficult one day when the brothers filled the barrel with snapping turtles.

His main love was baseball, and he played for the Austin High School team and also for the Legion team. Later, when he worked for Scheid Plumbing, he was the boss of Moose Skowron, who played for the Austin Packers minor league team and was later an all-star for the New York Yankees. At one point, Stanek was recruited to play professionally for the Duluth Dukes in the St. Louis Cardinal farm system, but chose not to.

Baseball was a strong tradition in the family. It was claimed that Bernie was the best ballplayer, but all the boys played. Donald, the youngest, played for an Air Force team.

Stanek graduated from Austin High School in 1941, just before America's entry into the war. He hung around town for a year, worked a while at the Hormel plant, and then enlisted in the Marine Corps at the end of 1942. "It was either that or get drafted."

He went to boot camp in San Diego. "I was sick when they were spending their time on the rifle range. I had what they called cat fever, and I missed quite a bit. When it came time to take the test, I shot very poorly. It was probably a good thing because if I'd shot well I'd have been stuck in some line company."

Instead, Stanek was chosen to go into the Marine air program. "It was what I wanted, and by gosh I got it. I did go

back after a year and take the test again to get my sharp-shooter badge."

Training was at Norman, Oklahoma, where Stanek learned his trade as an airplane armorer. It was his job to put bombs, rockets, 20 millimeter shells, .50 caliber bullets and other armament on Marine Corps planes.

He was next sent to Marine Corps Air Station Santa Barbara at Goleta, California, where his training continued. "They were training new Marine Corps pilots there, and we were training as the new ground crews."

Stanek anticipated he might be sent aboard a Navy carrier as part of his squadron, VMF-221, but no one knew for sure. "They don't tell you nothing."

Finally, in December of 1944, his squadron joined the crew of the USS Bunker Hill, an Essex-class carrier that was beginning its second tour of the Pacific. The first action was at Iwo Jima, aiding in the capture of the island.

"My younger brother, Arnie, was fighting at Iwo Jima. He got shot, but he survived. I didn't even know he was there."

Stanek said during the war he generally had no clue where his siblings were. There was very little letter writing between the brothers and sisters, and when a letter did come home to the parents, any information about where they were was censored out.

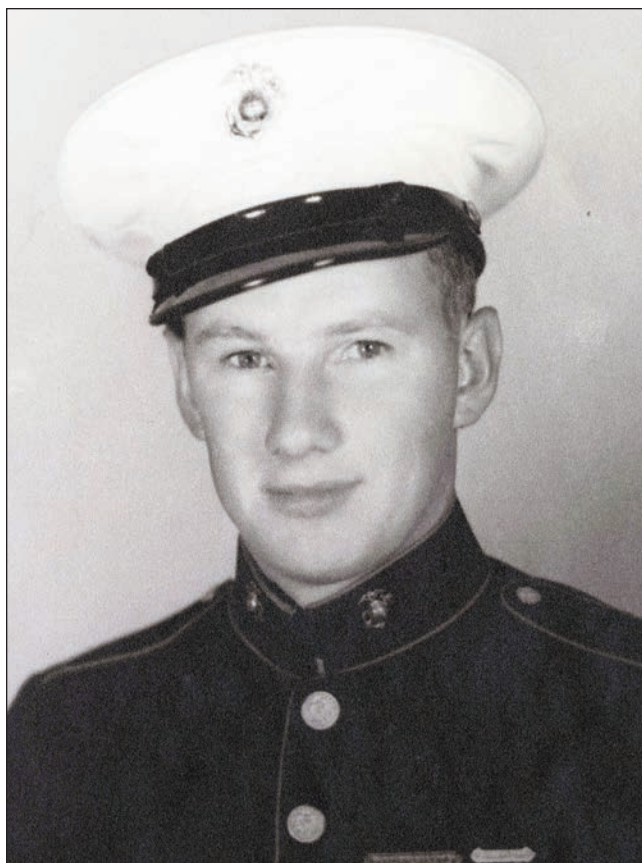
Aboard ship, life settled into a routine based on when the air operations were scheduled. "We were always busy with

*The Stanek Family of Austin, Minnesota, sent eight children off to war during World War II -- and also the family dog. All returned safely. Only one now remains to tell his story. Stanley 'Bud' Stanek joined the Marine Corps and served in a fighter squadron stationed on board the USS Bunker Hill. He was on board the ship in 1945 when it was hit by two kamikaze planes that set the ship afire and killed nearly 400 Marines and Sailors.*



a lot of stuff to do. When we weren't working on the planes, we would be loading the ammunition belts with the different kinds of shells."

During air ops, Stanek was often on the flight deck.



**STANLEY 'BUD' STANEK**  
As a Marine during World War II



**STANLEY 'BUD' STANEK**  
At home in Austin

# The Stanek Family

**Leonard**, born 1912, joined the Merchant Marine and served in the North Atlantic.



**Stanley "Bud,"** born 1923, enlisted in the Marines and became a member of the ground crew for a Marine squadron, VMF 221, the Fighting Falcons. Served on board the USS Bunker Hill.



**Richard**, born 1914, enlisted in the Army in 1944, served in Italy fighting in the Apennines and the Po Valley. He earned a citation for meritorious service while fighting with the 86th Mountain Infantry.



**Arnold**, born 1925, enlisted in the Marine Corps by lying about his age, served on Saipan, Tinian, Roi-Namur and Iwo Jima. He was wounded at Saipan and Iwo Jima. On Saipan, he took a Japanese pillbox. Fighting with the Fourth Marine Regiment, he was awarded two Purple Hearts and a Bronze Star during the war.



**Robert**, born 1914 (Richard's twin), joined the Army. He served in Florida for a time as the skipper of a 48-foot Chris-Craft boat used by the Army. He was later stationed in the Aleutians.



**Dorothy**, born 1926, worked for the U.S. government in Washington D.C. in the State Department.



**Marjorie**, born 1916, WAVE. Served in Alameda and San Diego, California.



**Donald**, born 1930, too young to serve in World War II. Joined the Air Force and served in Korea and Japan. As an airplane mechanic, he fixed Gen. Curtis LeMay's aircraft and also his Cadillac.



**Bernard**, born 1918. Tried to join the Marines at the onset of the war, but was rejected because of foot problems. He joined the Army instead. Served overseas for 38 months at New Guinea and the Philippines. He was in a mobile refrigeration unit and earned two battle stars serving with the Americal Division.



**King Wags**, black Labrador cross, served in the K-9 Corps in Camp Breckenridge, Kentucky. He was a sentry dog and after the war guarded the parents' house. He served almost two years, and was given an honorable discharge. When the Staneks were notified King was done with his service, Albert and Caroline chose not to have the dog come home because they thought he might be too mean, but son and daughter, Donald and Dorothy, forged the parents' name on the papers requesting King be sent home. Albert and Caroline were surprised when they got a call that King was at the railway station. They drove down, and Donald yelled, "Here, King." The dog jumped off the train, jumped through the back window of the car, and sat down between Donald and Dorothy. King was home.



**Helen**, born 1921, Women's Army Corps. Worked as a secretary/assistant on the staff of Gen. Dwight Eisenhower at Supreme Headquarters in Europe. She was one of nine secretaries to Eisenhower, and worked directly under Gen. Robert Crawford, Eisenhower's assistant chief of staff. Wherever Eisenhower traveled, Helen Stanek also went and her experiences included Scotland, Goering's house in Berlin, and she was present at the "little red schoolhouse" in Reims, France, where the German surrender was signed.



**George "Dee" Faas**, Helen's husband, served as a medic and was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for his heroism at Bougainville. On one day he was sent out six times, and saved six soldiers' lives.

Father **Albert** Stanek served during the Spanish American War.

Mother **Caroline** Stanek. At the end of the war, from nephew Lennie: "I don't think Grandma drank, but we did not see her the rest of the night, so maybe she had a glass or two of wine to celebrate her sons and daughters would be coming home safe."



The Stanek Family of Austin hung this banner in their front window during World War II. It contained eight stars for the eight children who served in the war. The silver stars were not authorized by Congress, but it was common practice to use silver to indicate a member of the family who had come home from the war. The banner is now on display at the Mower County Historical Society in Austin.



Albert and Caroline Stanek raised their 10 children in this house in Austin.



Albert and Caroline on their wedding day.

“When the planes came in, the crews would go out. We would re-arm the planes right off the bat on the flight deck so they could go right back out again. We worked behind barriers.”

It was a dangerous place to be. “The planes would come in so fast. We were always afraid that the rockets on their wings would come off and come flying down the deck.”

Once a Corsair had landed, the crews would talk to the pilots to find out if everything had worked on the aircraft. “We’d want to know if everything was okay, or if there were any problems.”

One of the pilots in the squadron was one of the most decorated Marine Corps fighter pilots in the war, James Swett. Swett had already earned the Medal of Honor by the time of his service on the Bunker Hill, and would go on to have 15.5 confirmed kills in the war. He also earned eight Distinguished Flying Crosses and two Purple Hearts.

Bunker Hill stood about eight to ten miles off the coast of Iwo Jima, and because it was such a short distance to the battleground, they would often fly two or more missions in day.

The carrier was the flag ship of the fleet, and carried Admiral Marc Mitscher aboard. “You could see him up in the crow’s nest now and then.”

After Iwo, the carrier went north and took part in an attack on the Japanese mainland. The fleet then headed south to support the invasion of Okinawa. By this time, a new element had been added to the war – the Japanese use of kamikaze or suicide aircraft to attack the U.S. fleet.

“There was always a sense of danger,” Stanek said. “They would come in under the radar, and they got shot at very little before they were on us.”

On May 11, 1945, the Bunker Hill was the victim of two kamikazes diving into her flight deck, one of the most lethal attacks in the war.

In the first Japanese attack, the plane dropped a 550-pound bomb that went through the flight deck and out the side of the ship before it exploded. The kamikaze pilot then crashed his plane into the flight deck, destroying several U.S. planes and causing a huge fire.

Thirty seconds later, the second enemy plane attacked, again dropping a 550-lb. bomb on the flight deck. This one went through the deck and exploded below. That pilot also crashed his plane onto the flight deck near the Bunker Hill’s island, or superstructure.

The ship was just getting ready for air operations, and the flight deck was crowded with airplanes, fully fueled and loaded with bombs and other armament. When one plane burned and exploded, it set fire to the planes around it.

Commander Swett, flying above the wounded ship, had to land on another carrier.

Stanek’s crew had just re-armed the squadron and were in their quarters one deck below the flight deck when the ship was attacked.

Stanek said his assignment during battle stations, “was someplace under the flight deck. I never got to it, of course.”

Stanek chooses not to talk about what happened next, only saying that he made his way out of the compartment and worked his way to the rear of the ship. A newspaper clipping from that time gives a hint of what Stanek was facing.

“Stanek was below deck in a compartment when a bomb struck. Within the compartment, about 35 men died of fire and suffocation. Heavy smoke poured from the badly damaged ship for two days after the attack.”

Dozens of men crowded into the aft part of the ship, unable to move forward because of the fires, and at the same time trying to breathe while surrounded by the asphyxiating smoke. In other parts of the ship men were dying by the scores as the Bunker Hill’s ventilation system sucked the black smoke below and it filled the compartments.

Many men dove off the ship to escape the raging fires. In all, 389 men aboard Bunker Hill were killed or were missing. Another 264 were wounded.

Heroic men kept the ship’s boilers and engines running and the ship survived. Slowly the fires burned out or were extinguished. The men trapped at the back of the ship were able to escape. Stanek was among them.

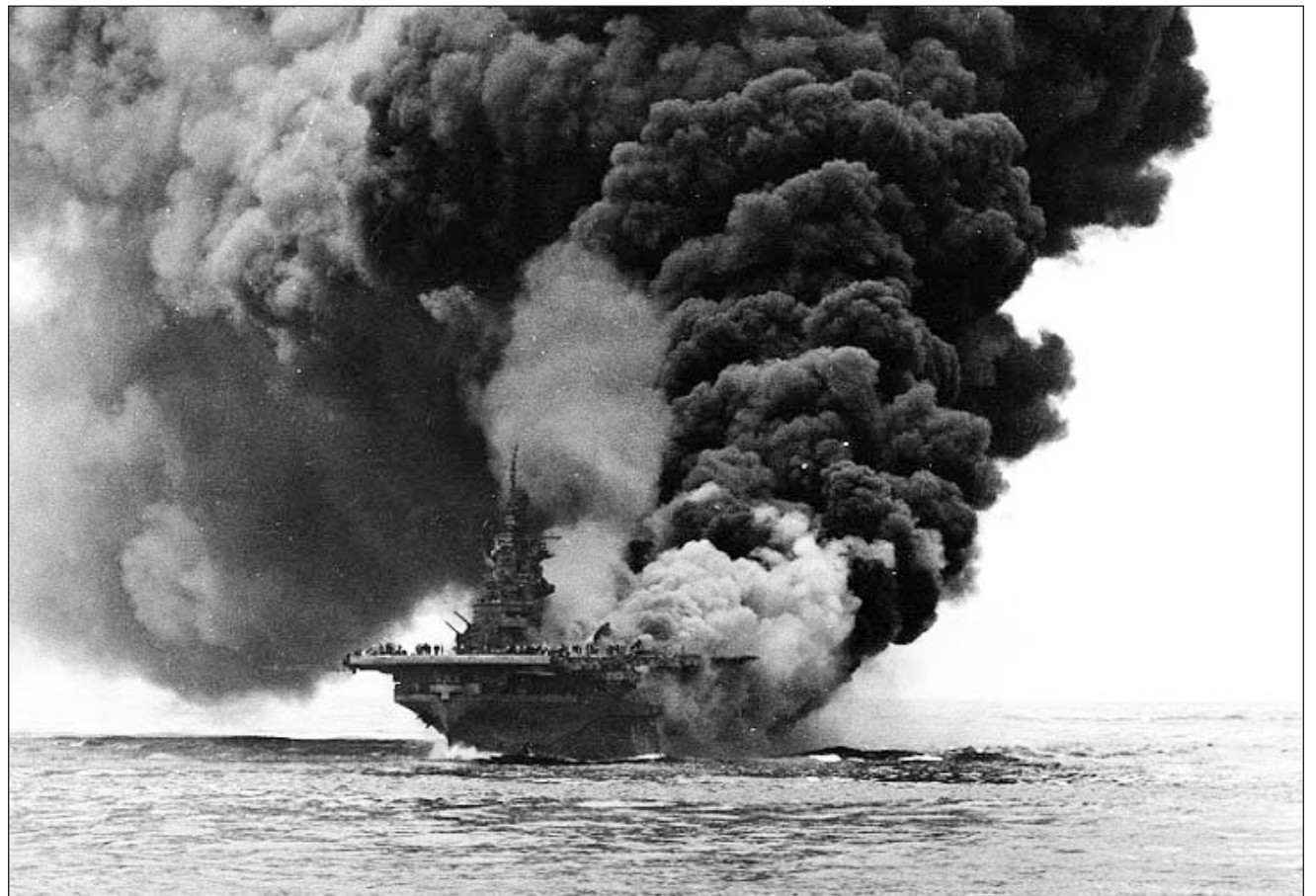
With his quarters destroyed, he and others slept on the flight deck for a time.

The ship, with gaping holes in its decks, steamed for Honolulu. On the way, Stanek witnessed many of the burials at sea.

“The services were held on the port side. There would be six stretchers and six bodies. There would be a priest, a minister, a rabbi and they all gave a little ceremony, and then they’d drop the bodies into the sea. They were weighted with a five-inch shell, but sometimes they would still float. Then they’d bring six more bodies out. I watched for quite a while.”

Fleet Admiral Mitscher had to transfer his command and himself to another ship. Mitscher had lost about half his staff in the attack. Stanek saw the admiral being transferred aboard a bosun’s chair to a smaller ship.

Stanek followed the ship to the Bremerton, Washington, shipyards and eventually ended up back at the Santa Barbara air station. Meanwhile, the war had ended. “I had enough points to get out, but we were considered as essential to the Marine Corps. They kept us on for several



After being struck by two kamikazes on May 11, 1945, the flight deck of the USS Bunker Hill (CV-17) burns out of control. Nearly 400 were killed in the attack. Bud Stanek survived, but had to endure the smoke in the aft part of the ship.



Two ID cards used by Bud Stanek during his time in the Marine Corps.



Stanek, front row on the left, shown with his fellow air crew members at a Marine base in California.

months.”

He was finally discharged in January 1946 as a staff sergeant at Great Lakes Naval Base in Chicago, took a train to Milwaukee and St. Paul, and then hitchhiked back to Austin, carrying his seabag all the way.

He tried college, but then became a steam fitter for a large company and worked on many major projects in Minnesota including the Monticello nuclear plant. He retired in 1985.

He had married Joan McFarland in 1946 and they had three children. They have five grandchildren and one great grandchild. He and Joan will celebrate their 70th wedding anniversary this year.

He is the last surviving member of the family who sent eight children and a dog off to war.



Six weeks after the attack, the Navy released information for the U.S. press.

# District Commanders

## SECOND DISTRICT Ryan Hill Commander



Hello, Department of Minnesota from the 2nd District. We are six months into this Legion Family year and I've had an interesting time doing this job. The 2nd District Vice Commanders have done a wonderful job working with Post Commanders and Membership Directors on membership. The last report I saw shows 2nd District in 2nd place!! Great job, everyone.

The scheduled Revitalization for 2nd District has been cancelled for now. The target area only yielded 56 veterans' names for us to work with, so we are going to refocus on the entire district. Thank you, Posts for doing such a good job. Department and National are working with us to set another date and time for a revitalization effort. Please visit the website, [mnlegion2nddistrict.com](http://mnlegion2nddistrict.com), as I will ask the webmaster to post details as soon as they are set.

One exciting piece of news is that fundraising for the Commander & President's Project for the Luverne Veterans Home is very near its goal! Thank you for your donations and if you haven't yet donated, please consider doing so-it will be deeply appreciated by President Darlene and myself and by the veterans who call the Luverne Veterans Home "Home".

Have a safe rest of the winter and always remember our fellow veterans and the active military.

## FIFTH DISTRICT Gary Martin Commander



Congratulations to our Oratorical Contest winner who was sponsored by Wold-Chamberlain Post 99. His name will be announced after the state contest. He will represent the Fifth District in February at the Semi-Finals. Thank you to Past Fifth District Commander Richard Ward our Oratorical Chairman and all the great volunteers who participated in the program.

Membership continues to be a challenge. As of January 13 we were 26 members behind last year. I am asking each Fifth District Vice Commander to contact their assigned Post Commanders and Membership Directors encouraging them to make that personal contact to all remaining unpaid members. Let's get ahead of the numbers in February. Congratulations to The Hellenic, Bainbridge, Joe Smith and The Minneapolis Veterans Home Posts on attaining 100% or exceeding their membership goal.

"Outstanding Enlisted Man/Woman of the Year" instructions have been sent to each Post. For applications contact Fifth District National Security/Foreign Relations Chairmen Curt Norenberg at 651-631-2706 or [cdn@tc.umn.edu](mailto:cdn@tc.umn.edu) or Department Headquarters at 651-291-1800.

As Always, "Keep Looking Forward and Keep It Positive".

## EIGHTH DISTRICT Jennifer Havlick Commander



Greetings, winter has really settled in here in the Northland. Sub-zero temperatures mean more inside than outside activities. This brings me to a great indoor activity: Membership. Currently the 8th District is at 86% of our 2016 goal of 4630 members. Three posts have met their goal, Barnum Post 415, Northome Post 499 and Grand Portage Post 2009. Way to go. Now I know the rest of you can do it, so let's get on those phones and start contacting members who haven't renewed yet. Ask them why they haven't and offer assistance if you post is able to. Remember our strength in Washington D.C. is dependent on our numbers. We will not be able to keep President Lincoln's promise without a strong active membership. Next please remember to use the new 2016 transmittal form membership turn in. The new transmittal forms are Pink. Department will not accept anymore 2015 renewals. Coming up on February 6th is the Department Sweetheart rally at Legionville in Brainerd. Next will be the 8th and 10th membership rally at Post 102 in Anoka. The address is 400 West Main St. Anoka. All 8th District Posts are encouraged to send a representative. On March 5th we have the Department Appreciation Rally at Legionville and on March 19th we have our 8th District Mid-Winter Meeting. See you all soon.

## THIRD DISTRICT Don Skow Commander



The membership team for our District, along with all of our Posts has done a great job of keeping us on top. Thank you all for your efforts but we are not done yet, one more big push should do it. Congratulations to the 15 posts that are at goal or all-time high.

National Commander Dale Barnett will be in Forest Lake for a breakfast meeting at 8 a.m. on Monday, February 1. He will also be in Hutchinson on Wednesday, February 3rd at 8 for a breakfast meeting. We need all Post Commanders from the District who are at goal or all time high to be at one of these events to have your picture taken with the National Commander.

The 1st and 3rd District fishing contest will be held in Elysian on February 7th at 1 p.m. The Auxiliary, SAL and Legionnaires are all welcome, see you on Lake Francis for all the fun and excitement and a cup of "hunters stew".

The commander's project this year has a long way to go but promises to be great when it's completed. We are planning to increase beach access to the lake for those veterans who are handicapped or with special needs. It will get a lot of use by veterans and their families for years to come. (Make checks payable to Commanders Project BM Vet's Camp) Many thanks to all for the help and hospitality you have given me. Hope to see many of you at the National Commanders visits and other upcoming events.

## SIXTH DISTRICT Dewayne Collins Commander



Membership is one of our focuses in the New Year. If you have not paid your dues yet, please do so now. The new rate takes effect as if 21 January when National will increase their rate. Membership training will take place during the Sweetheart Rally on 6 February at Legionville. We are trying to reach a goal of 92% by then.

The following weekend is the Mid-Winter conference at the Waite Park Moose Club beginning at 8:30 a.m. on Feb. 13. We have an interesting speaker that afternoon at the Silver Star Post in Waite Park. Hope to see you there.

A membership revitalization conference will be held in Brainerd Post 255 from 8-12 February. If you can spare some time and would like to help please give them a call. I did have the opportunity to assist with the Melrose revitalization project, what a success. They gained over 40 membership turn-ins for Post 1982.

The first week of February the National Commander, Dale Barnett of Georgia will be here touring 12 Minnesota posts. Little Falls Post is the farthest north he will be traveling. I will be in attendance for that event on 1 February to welcome to the best district in Northern Minnesota.

The 6th District Oratorical was held at the Brainerd Post 255 on 23 January. I was impressed with the contestants' skills and discipline.

Please do not hesitate to contact me at [dcollinssr@yahoo.com](mailto:dcollinssr@yahoo.com) or (218) 821-7314.

## NINTH DISTRICT Denise Milton Commander



Greetings, Roaring 9th District. Mid-winter conference was a success. Thank you to all for making it so. Our year is half over and it is now time to start gathering information for your consolidated post reports and annual reports to receive the credit for all you do for our veterans, children and communities. These are also used when we lobby for benefits for our veterans, military and their families.

Membership is going well, we are at 90%, but now comes the time to make those personal visits and phone calls. The new dues increase is now in effect, don't forget to use the new transmittal form (neon pink), otherwise they will be returned. I received an update of posts that have sent in their new dues increase and we remain 18 posts short. Please fill it out and send to department soon otherwise your post will make up the difference.

We had a very successful District Mid-Winter Conference with more Posts and members represented than in recent years. It was an honor to have National Vice Commander Alan A. Davis Sr. of The American Legion and National Vice Commander Dennis Henkemeyer of the Sons of The American Legion as our guests. A special thank you to our guest speaker Hannah LeTexier of the American Diabetes Association.

Continue to keep our military and their families in your prayers. They remain in harm's way while protecting our way of life.

Upcoming events: Godfathers Rally, Feb. 5, 5-6 p.m. lunch, followed by program, Sweetheart Rally, Feb. 6. starting at 2 p.m.

## FOURTH DISTRICT Dan Williams Commander



The Fabulous Fourth is enjoying this wonderful time of the year with the snow, cold and ice. These are the essential elements for us to take part in the St. Paul Winter Carnival. Thank you; 4th and 5th District Legionnaires, Auxiliary Members, Sons of the American Legion and Legion Riders who took the time to walk with our delegation in the Grand Day Parade. You represented us very well.

Continuing with the joy of the seasonal elements, Saturday February 6th the American Legion Riders will host the Annual Ice Fishing Contest at the Vets Camp on Big Marine Lake. This event provides an opportunity for veterans from the various Veterans Homes to get out on the lake and swap fish stories and even catch a few fish too. This is a great time of fellowship. If you have some time and will not be traveling to the Sweetheart Rally please join the fun. You may choose to stop by in the morning prior to going to Legionville for the rally. We are now looking toward spring and exceeding our member goals for 2016 as well as fulfilling our objectives as outlined within our Four Pillars. Let's face it; we are here for the veterans and their families. What are you doing on a regular basis to contact a veteran? We do it for God and Country.

Calendar: February 6th, Department Sweetheart Rally at Legionville; February 10th RCCC District Meeting Rosetown Memorial Post 542; Feb 21st 4th Dist VA Visitation 1:00pm @ Minneapolis VAMC

## SEVENTH DISTRICT Karen Welander Commander



The Legion, like other organizations, counts on volunteers to help put on programs that are for the veterans, children, and communities. The more volunteers to do the programs, the less time to do it. Don't count on a chosen few to do it all of the time but recruit other members to assist and expand programs. Your voice in your post and your volunteering to help out to support veterans, currently serving members of the military, children and youth, honor guard for memorial services are important.

How are you volunteering this month? The Mid-Winter Conference was a great opportunity to learn more about what post/units/squadrons are doing in all program areas in the American Legion Family. I learned much from the family about programs, post/officer liability insurance, and public relations with our communities. You would be surprised what you missed and what was shared. Thank you Cosmos for a fantastic job at the Mid-Winter Conference.

Have you recruited for Outstanding Enlisted Man/Woman of the Year, Law Enforcement Officer of the Year, and Firefighter of the Year? Now is the time to complete those applications and get them sent in. Need assistance or the forms to complete? Call any district officer for assistance. They will work with you in the completion of those applications and get them submitted. Visit your community leaders for nominees.

## TENTH DISTRICT Bill Johnson Commander



Greeting from the Mighty 10th, As I write this article, we have completed our Mid-Winter conference. As part of our conference we had presentations from the Veterans Park in Ramsey, and Support the Troops, a small committee that holds an annual tournament to raise money to support veteran's causes.

The Veterans Park in Ramsey is a year-round facility with a lake stocked full of pan fish, and is only available to veterans. The support the troops group has an annual golf tournament in St Francis. If you would like to participate, shoot me an e-mail to [billdtm@yahoo.com](mailto:billdtm@yahoo.com), and I will forward it to the sponsors.

Support the troops, gave me a check for my project, in the amount of \$5000. Along with that I received donations from the Wayzata Post for \$1,000, and \$10,000 from my home Post of Osseo. Together with a \$175 check from the Cokato, the district is off to a good start, raising money for the Fisher House at the VA facility in Minneapolis.

The final highlight of the conference was a report from Paul Hassing on what it would take to get younger veterans to join The American Legion. As soon as Paul sends me an electronic copy, I will be more than glad to share it with you. Just send me an e-mail.