



Legionnaire

Volume 97, Number 3

For God and Country

March 2015



WASHINGTON CONFERENCE -- Jason Jackson Frye, legislative director for Rep. Tom Emmer, R-Minn., discussed the congressman's positions on veterans issues with Bob Hart, the legislative chairman for the Department of Minnesota.

Minnesotans lobby Congress for federal veterans' legislation

A delegation of about 30 Minnesotans traveled to Washington DC in February to lobby Minnesota's eight congressman and two senators.

The Washington Conference produced a first for the Minnesota delegation, and also included some late drama.

(Pictures and the national legislative priorities are on pages 8-9 of this edition.)

The new aspect for the gathering was a luncheon at the Library of Congress Member's Room for all the congressional delegation. The buffet-lunch drew one congressman, Rep. Collin Peterson, D-Minn., and representatives from four other House offices.

Visits were also made to the offices of Sen. Al Franken and Sen. Amy Klobuchar, both D-Minn.

The drama came on Tuesday, the day the delegation heads up to Capitol Hill to lobby. A hastily-called press conference

brought Veterans Affairs Secretary Bob McDonald to the Legion's hotel to speak on his incorrect statement to a homeless veteran. McDonald had told a veteran that he had served in the Special Forces.

While McDonald had both airborne and Ranger training, he did not serve in the Special Forces.

"That was wrong, and I have no excuse."

McDonald said he had been trying to connect with the veteran. "We at the VA are working hard to restore trust. Again, I apologize to those who may have been offended by the statement."

McDonald was asked questions by Legionnaires at the press conference, and he talked about the difficulty the VA was having in catching up on all the backlogged veteran's claims. He said his department was working mandatory overtime, but the

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Caroline Donaldson repeat Minnesota Oratorical winner



CAROLINE DONALDSON

Caroline Donaldson became a repeat winner of the Department of Minnesota Oratorical Contest in February, and again has qualified to take part in the national contest in Indianapolis.

Donaldson, 18, is a senior and is home schooled.

She is the daughter of John and Lorinda Donaldson of Eden Prairie, and she was sponsored by Wayzata Post 118 and by the 10th District.

"I think I enjoyed the contest even more than last year," she said. "I knew the competition would be good, but I also knew my speeches were good."

The contestants are required to give a longer oratory on a prepared subject related to the U.S. Constitution. In the second part of the contest, they must do a shorter speech from a list of topics - which they do not know until just before they speak. These shorter speeches are based on an amendment to the Constitution.

"The amendment topics were more challenging this year, but I enjoy a challenge."

Donaldson's brother, Jack, was the winner of the contest several years ago and finished third at the national contest. Caroline represented Minnesota last year at the national contest. "It helps to hear to hear the finalists from last year, and the variety of their speeches. It helped me prepare for this year."

She said her goal is to advance much further in the

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Miller to speak at Moon Testimonial

Past National Commander Butch Miller will be the featured speaker at the Testimonial Dinner for Department Commander Peggy Moon.

The event will be held at the Northern Lights Casino in Walker on Saturday, March 21.

Miller, from Virginia but born and raised in Wabasha, Minnesota, was National Commander in 1998-99.

The event will begin with a social hour at 5:30 p.m. with dinner and the testimonial program to follow at 6:30.

The cost is \$25 per person, and dinner reservations should be sent to "Commander Peggy's Testimonial," Kriesel-Jacobson Post 560, Box 123, Zimmerman, MN 55398. Reservations must be received no later than March 14. Rooms at the Northern Lights are blocked out under "Commander's Dinner." For room reservations, call 1-866-652-4683.

Other hotels in the area include the Country Inn and Suites, 218-547-1400 or the America's Best Value, 218-547-2200.



PNC BUTCH MILLER

National Commander visits 12 posts in Minnesota

National Commander Mike Helm of Nebraska toured northern and western Minnesota during a four-day visit to the state in early February.

Helm spoke at 12 Legion posts. In all, he met with nearly 800 Legionnaires and guests and 17 news media representatives.

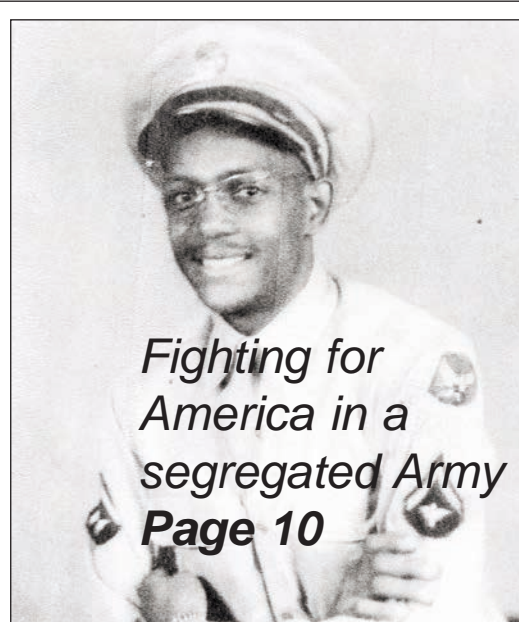
(Pictures of the tour are on pages 12-15 including those posts that reached goal.)

Helm said his year reminded him of a four-by-four truck where the wheels -- Legion, Auxiliary, SAL and Legion Riders -- are all pulling together to

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National Commander Mike Helm spoke at Apple Valley, the last stop on his four-day tour of the state.



Fighting for America in a segregated Army
Page 10

Helm visits state

Continued from Page 1

advance the cause of the Legion.

As he traveled from Moorhead to Apple Valley with ten stops inbetween, he hit on several themes of his year:

-- The Legion should help legal immigrants become citizens. "We need to open up our post homes and help those who came legally to full citizenship."

-- The nation cannot back down on its responsibilities in the world. "People would like to think that if we were a second-rate power, people would like us better. We know that's not true."

-- Getting the VA back on track after last year's scandal and resignation of Secretary Shinseki. "There's some people there who are more interested in bonuses and more interested in making the VA look good than they are in helping veterans."

-- Changing the VA's standard response to PTSD and traumatic brain injury from drugs to more innovative methods. "Drugs lead to suicides and homelessness. There have been more suicide deaths with veterans than all the combat deaths of Iraq and Afghanistan put together."

He concluded each speech with a story about how he was traveling across middle America in an airplane and how he could see the little pockets of light below.

"I like to think of them as Legion posts. To me they are little campfires of caring, campfires of service and freedom. Keep those campfires going."

The trip covered about 1,000 miles and made stops at Moorhead, Detroit Lakes, Walker, Grand Rapids, Brainerd, North Branch, Roseville, Le Center, New Ulm, Redwood Falls, St. Peter and Apple Valley.

Traveling with the National Commander were Department Commander Peggy Moon, Membership Director Pat Logan, and Communications Dir. Al Zdon.



FINALISTS -- The four finalists posed with leaders of the Oratorical Contest following the event in Anoka. From left are Debra Norman, Northfield, co-chair, Department Commander Peggy Moon, Isaac Winnes, Minneapolis, second place, Richard Erpelding, Kasson, fourth place, Caroline Donaldson, Eden Prairie, first place, Angela Gudahl, Pequot Lakes, third place, Tess Davis, chairman; and Chris Ronning, Department President.

Donaldson repeat winner in Oratorical

Continued from Page 1

contest. "I'm praying toward that goal."

"And I want to say thanks for all the support I've received from Legionnaires."

Donaldson is attending the University of Northwestern in St. Paul on the high school post-secondary options program. She is a music performance major who plays the pedal harp and the piano.

She is the second oldest of 10 children, and she said it's likely there are more Donaldsons on the way to compete in the Oratorical Contest.

In addition to Donaldson, the other three finalists were: Isaac Winnes, second place, Minneapolis, a junior home schooler sponsored by Wold-Chamberlain Post 99 and the 5th District; Angela Gudahl, third place, Pequot Lakes, a junior at Pequot Lakes High School, sponsored by Deerwood Post 557 and the Sixth District; and Richard Erpelding, fourth, Kasson, a ninth grader who is home schooled and sponsored by Kasson Post 333 and the First District.

Erpelding is the brother of Kelly Erpelding who won the 2013 contest and who finished second to Donaldson this

past year.

The scholarship prizes for the finalists were \$1,500, \$1,000, \$700 and \$500. Donaldson will receive an additional \$1,500 for qualifying for national and another \$1,500 if she advances past the first round. The national winner receives an \$18,000 scholarship.

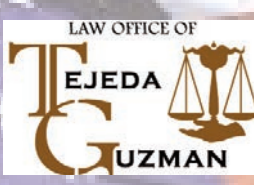
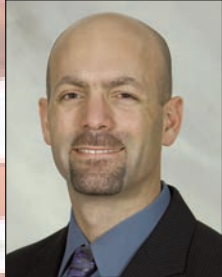
The national contest will be held April 10-12 at the Wyndham Indianapolis West Hotel.

The other competitors in the Minnesota contest were: Ethan Anderson, Lake Crystal, a senior at Lake Crystal Wellcome Memorial High School, sponsored by Lake Crystal Post 294 and the Second District; Miranda Hawkinson, Rochester, a junior at Pine Island High School, sponsored by Pine Island Post 184 and the Third District; Rebekah Johnson, Arden Hills, a senior at Concordia Academy in Roseville, sponsored by Rosetown Post 542 and the Fourth District; Sarah Schmidt, Darwin, a junior at Litchfield High School, sponsored by Litchfield Post 104 and the Seventh District; and Auroura Eckberg, Rochert, a junior at Detroit Lakes High School, sponsored by Detroit Lakes Post 15 and the Ninth District.

The Eighth District did not have a contestant.

Veterans Needed for Study

Are you a military veteran? Have you experienced combat or any other trauma? The Minneapolis VA Health Care System is seeking veteran volunteers for research to find out if spiritual support groups are helpful for veterans who have experienced trauma. Volunteers may be assigned to standard or spiritual support groups and may be paid up to \$200. To learn more about this study, please call 612-467-5737.

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Legionville Seeking Summer Help

#1 cabin counselors- will be living in the Dorms with the campers. Will be acting as big brother or big sister during the week the campers are here at Legionville.

#2 Instructors- We will be needing a Beach Front Director who will instruct Swimming or Canoeing and supervise the others, working as a team. Instructors are also needed for swimming, canoeing, first aid.

Lead staff- We will be needing lead staff that will be in charge of camp administration, do daily reports to the Camp Manager and be able to run to camp General Store. Will need to run computer to do the Camp Newsletter and Graduation Diplomas and other reports needed to run camp.

Contact: Roy Kruger, roykruger@gmail.com




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Endorsements

Tobkin endorsed for vice commander

Arthur D. Tobkin has been endorsed by Bagley Post 16 for the position of Department Vice-Commander for the Sixth and Ninth Districts of The American Legion Department of Minnesota for the year of 2015-2016.

Tobkin is a Life Member of the Bagley post. During his 39 years of membership he has served in various offices, including Commander, Vice-Commander, Sergeant at Arms, and Judge Advocate. Tobkin has been the long-time Chairman of the Honor Guard, Scholarship,

Americanism committees; and also has served on the Post Executive Committee.

On the District level, Tobkin has served as District Commander; Vice-Commander, Adjutant, Sergeant at Arms and Judge Advocate.

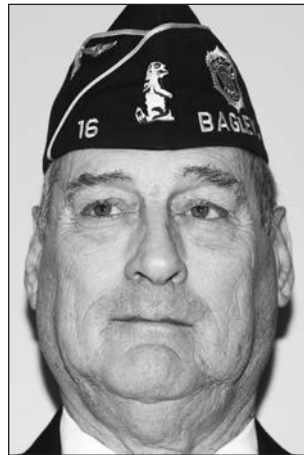
At the Department, he has served on the Americanism Committee and has held the chairmanship of the Americanism Committee since 2006.

Tobkin entered the US Navy in 1961 and was an air crewman on Anti-Submarine-Warfare patrol

aircraft in the Pacific. He left active duty in 1964 and then served six years in active reserve status also as an air crewman on patrol squadrons based at the Twin Cities Naval Air Station.

Tobkin is a graduate of the University of Minnesota with a degree in Civil Engineering, is semi-retired, but still performs consultant work in civil engineering.

He has been married to his wife Lee (Leona) for 49 years; has five children, 14 grandchildren and four great grandchildren.



ART TOBKIN

Commander Moon takes to the airwaves



Department Commander Peggy Moon answers a question from Tom Lyons, the host of the Minnesota Military Hour on Twin Cities News Talk radio, AM 1130, and on 23 other stations across the state. Moon talked about the legislative priorities of the Commander's Task Force, of which she is the chairman.

Washington Conference

Continued from Page 1

VA needs additional funds to deal with the backlog.

Earlier in the day, the Legion heard from three key members of the House and Senate on the state of veterans affairs.

Rep. Jeff Miller, R-Fla., chairman of the House veterans committee, told the Legion that it did make a difference this past year when it called attention to the schedule cheating at the VA medical center in Phoenix and later called for the resignation of then VA Secretary Eric Shinseki.

Miller said the scandal led to the "most significant changes in VA history." He said the legislation, including more ability to fire VA staff who are not performing, however has not had the desired effect.

"It's been nine months and no one has been fired or put on administrative leave."

Miller said more legislation is on tap to make the VA more accountable and more transparent. "We've got to have a VA that's trying."

Sen. Johnny Isakson, R-Ga., chairman of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee, said his agenda for veterans includes implementing the Veterans Choice bill, which allows veterans some leeway in selecting a nearby clinic, making sure the DoD and the VA share medical records, ending veteran homelessness and dealing with the huge mental health issues among veterans.

He said the VA employs 314,000 people.

Sen. Richard Blumenthal, D-Conn, and ranking member of the Senate veterans committee, also spoke of mental health issues. "We got to help the veteran who served in combat but then lost the war at home."

Blumenthal spoke of the Clay Hunt Bill that brings more resources to bear on veterans suicide issues. He said that the bill was only a first step, and that much more needs to be done to help struggling veterans. "We will settle for nothing less than first class, world class treatment."

The politicians spoke at the Commander's Call, a meeting on the morning before Legionnaires from across the nation go visit their federal representatives and senators.

Many in the Minnesota delegation had great difficulty getting to Washington for the conference because the

Washington airports shut down Saturday due to snow. Many arrived late and without their luggage.

The meeting was interrupted when Commander Helm announced that McDonald had erroneously stated he had been in Special Forces. "We are greatly concerned. We need to hold him to a higher standard of integrity."

Helm said he personally liked McDonald, and that trust could be restored. "I hope the secretary gets this right."

The visit to Washington came to an end with Helm's testimony to Congress. A large group of Minnesotans attended the hearing.

Helm to Congress: VA needs to use new ideas

In a hearing room packed with more than 300 veterans and their families, American Legion National Commander Michael D. Helm laid out a wide-ranging legislative agenda before members and leadership of the House and Senate Committees on Veterans' Affairs.

"The prevailing concern," Helm told the lawmakers, "is transition assistance." Helm called for action to expand VA-recognized treatments for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and traumatic brain injury (TBI). He cited 2014 American Legion survey results that showed 59 percent of PTSD-TBI patients felt no improvement as a result of their VA treatment plans and 30 percent had quit their plans altogether because they did not work.

"For tens of thousands, VA's current prescription is not working," Helm said. "This breakdown contributes mightily to the high rate of veteran suicide, substance abuse and homelessness that our nation - and The American Legion - cannot abide." He asked Congress to study alternative treatments and call on VA to accept them. "Introduce and pass legislation that will require VA to recognize treatments other than those that are measured in milligrams and doses per day."

During the hearing, Helm fiercely defended VA against any attempts to privatize its health-care system in the long term.

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COMMANDER'S COLUMN

By Peggy Moon



What a month this has been. We started off with the National Commander's visit to our great state February 1, and visited 12 Posts throughout Minnesota in four days. We ate delicious food, enjoyed the company and conversation with many members of our American Legion Family, and listened to inspiring words from National Commander Mike Helm.

Thanks to all of you for taking time out of your schedule to join us. Not only did we get to visit with you, we got to meet and visit with many other members of our organization as we stayed at various hotels across the state. We met a family that was staying at our hotel due to a fire that had completely taken their home and belongings, and had the opportunity to tell them about Temporary Financial Assistance. We also met an individual one morning from Tampa, Florida, who still cherishes his time at Florida Boys State. It always amazes me how our organization touches so many lives.

As I write this column, we have just returned from our annual Washington Conference. The trip started out the same way it ended, with delayed flights due to snow and ice that was affecting the east coast. We were scheduled to depart Minneapolis on Saturday at 11:30 a.m., and didn't leave until Sunday morning at 6 a.m. We had a group of our Minnesota American Legion Family that actually spent Saturday night at the airport sleeping on the floor. Needless to say, even though most of us arrived sometime on Sunday, some of us were without luggage for much longer. Coming back Wednesday night, our flight was delayed by 45 minutes because it took that much time to de-ice the plane in Atlanta, Georgia. Hopefully, everyone is safely home today.

In Washington, we hosted a "Meet and Greet" with our Congressmen at the Library of Congress, and then visited with Senators Amy Klobuchar and Al Franken. We thanked them for their time and were warmly received. We discussed protecting the Defense Budget for sequestration,

continuing efforts to reform the VA, a more efficient VA claims system, researching new, alternative therapies for PTSD and traumatic brain injuries, work opportunities for veterans in the private sector, GI bill education, veterans' homelessness, and the flag amendment.

Now that I'm back home, I need to focus on the issues that affect the veterans of Minnesota. There are many bills that are being heard in our own Legislature, and I encourage you to log into www.leg.state.mn.us to get details. The time will come when we will need your support on the hill, and I hope you will join us. Remember, numbers matter and veterans vote.

On the membership side, we have been staying between second and third place nationally - which is the good news. The bad news is that we are about 1,500 members behind last year. We can and must do better. The last time Minnesota was under 82,000 members was 1953! We need to talk to those who haven't renewed. Visit them, and talk about the work we are doing on behalf of our veterans and their families.

We have scheduled revitalizations in the metro area March 25-29, and this will be a competition between the 4th and 5th Districts. Please take part in this. Representatives from our National Organization will be here to assist us all the way. Another District revitalization will take place in the 6th District in April around Brainerd and Little Falls.

Don't forget my Testimonial Saturday, March 21 at Northern Lights Casino in Walker. We have a great night planned, and it should be memorable (at least that's what I'm hearing). I need to have your dinner reservations no later than Friday, March 13, 2015. The cost of the meal is \$25 per person, and can be mailed to "Commander Peggy's Testimonial," American Legion Post 560, P.O. Box 123, Zimmerman, MN 55398. Make your reservations today.

Also, we are about half way in raising funds for Legionville. I understand the taping is done, and they are starting on the painting. Soon after, the floors will go in, and the bathrooms completed. Let's make this a reality and get this project done. Also, since the checkbook is out on the table, a donation for the National Emergency Fund would also be appreciated. If we get hit by a tornado this summer, we will need funds in the bank. Let's help protect each other.

Oh yeah - the car... Would you believe that it is back at the dealership at this moment, getting yet another new tire, and, of course, an oil change. I don't know why I'm going through tires - but it appears that I am. The mileage is now at 23,775 miles. Let The American Legion Birthday Dinners begin, and, of course, I'm trying to attend a few of the District Commanders' testimonials. I hope to see you at one of these events soon. Unless of course, I'm on the side of the road with a flat. Till then...

Wayne who are all solid members of the Legion and the Auxiliary. I'll bet you anything Harold is sitting by God's knee now telling him all about The American Legion.

We love you. We miss you.

Wayne Peter Umberto
Bertha Post 366

Threads of America

To the Editor:

Great story on Red Wing's Don Johnson. What wonderful people that family is. I well remember Don, his brother Ken, and their father Cam. Those three were known as Minnesota's best dressed men. And, they ran a men's clothier emporium second to none. The Johnson family has contributed immensely to the embodiment of what is good about America. Like the thread that holds together a quality garment, the Johnson's, including that bronze star ambulance driver, are the true remaining champions of that enormous world conflict.

James Edlund
Cannon Falls

and Ranger specialties, but he was never in Special Forces. He said he was simply trying to connect with the veteran, and that's why he fudged his biography.

Now you can make a good case that the media is just sitting like a jackal waiting for these kinds of tidbits to happen. But that doesn't excuse these two men, and a few others in recent years that lied about their backgrounds, from their responsibility to get it straight.

We have a suggestion for Williams, McDonald, and the rest: How about just telling the truth?

Both these men have important jobs in America, and we depend on them to have the highest integrity. When they lie, it destroys their reputations and harms the critical work that they do.

As grandma used to say: Better to die than tell a lie.

Chaplain's Corner

By
Steve Klinkner



As I got out of bed on Sunday morning I could hear the wind blowing and I knew the little bit of snow we got through the night was blowing around and making it hard to see town. I thought why don't I just stay in bed and forget attending Sunday church services? But I knew better, my parents raised my brothers and sisters to always go to church. It didn't matter if we had partied late or not, church was on Sunday no matter what. Snow storm or freezing rain, we went to church, it was very important to them. So my wife and I went to church. There were not very many there and the pastor's sermon was about "Who is in charge of yourself?"

We all know that God is there but we don't always put him first. If there is a sports event, we always find time to attend, but not church. All the churches in the world are seeing this change; younger families don't go to church unless it is a wedding, baptism, confirmation, etc. We need to find time for God today and everyday. He is just as real today as he was in that synagogue almost two thousand years ago. He is in the readings of the Bible.

When our worried hearts need his words of wisdom, we can find him there. Whenever we need to let the power of his grace fortify our tired and weak souls, we can do so right in your church. God is present in the ministry of your religious leaders. Whenever we need to be cleansed, forgiven, and healed by his grace, we can find him there, the very same God who expelled demons and astonished the crowds. And God is present among us in the liturgy because he promised that whenever two or three gathered in his name he will be there. We believe these things with our heads, but do we believe them with our hearts?

Hope and pray that the ministers don't get discouraged with their parishes. We must remember that others before us have had their disappointments and discouragement. Jeremiah was met with almost unimaginable discouragements. Yet in spite of all his longings to leave, he stood at his post of duty through the weary years, faithful to God even to the last. Jesus and his apostles faced many discouragements. We as members of parishes must be there to help the ministers whenever we can; get involved in your parish. Many children of God fail to be involved in personal evangelism and others who are doing it quit because of the discouragements connected with it. Because a work can be discouraging there is no reason not to be doing it if God wants it done. Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, was often discouraged in his labors but he didn't allow it to stop him from doing what he knew was right.

It has been said that the person who is forewarned is forearmed. Perhaps if we can anticipate some of the discouragements that typically arise, we will be able to deal with and overcome them. Jesus never gave up if he was blocked in one direction, he patiently looked in another. Sometimes in life things may not turn out as we have planned or as we would like them to and we may feel like giving up. Whenever you feel that way, look to Jesus and follow his example. In the midst of many discouragements, Jesus calmly, serenely, and thoughtfully kept right on proclaiming the great truths of Heaven, doing the will of God and living the proper life. Let us not be weary in well doing; for in due season we shall reap the encouragement needed to do what is right.

Legionnaire

The Minnesota

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Al Zdon, Editor

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Mail Call

Lost a great one

To the Editor:

We have lost a great American Legion member at the William Larson Post 366 in Bertha.

Harold Goepferd passed away on Jan 31st at the age of 96. He left behind so many people whose minds are full of good memories. He lived and breathed The American Legion for over 70 years. He had filled every post office at one time as a member, never missed a meeting until his health problems prevented it. He gave members his wisdom of the Legion. He always encouraged members to go to the meetings.

"Find out what the Legion is doing for you and what you can do for the Legion." Everyone he met that stated that they were a veteran, he would say, "Come to the post meeting. See how active we are. You'll see and have great comradeship. It's a family."

Harold had a smile and a greeting for everyone. He lent a listening ear for anyone needing one and gave of his wisdom when asked. He was that special person who comes and touches your life only once in a lifetime.

He left behind his three children, Norma, Cindy, and

Editorial

Honesty

In the last few weeks, we've had two notable Americans tell lies about their past. Brian Williams of NBC News couldn't quite get the facts straight on a helicopter trip he took in Iraq a few years ago. And Veterans Affairs Secretary Bob McDonald couldn't quite remember if he was in the Special Forces or not.

Williams is now under suspension for his statements. Apparently he's had other little problems with other incidents in his past. He seems to have a penchant for elaboration.

McDonald was in California when he encountered a homeless veteran. The man told McDonald he was in the Special Forces and McDonald replied that he too was in Special Forces. The Secretary did have training in airborne

What's Happening

Hockey Tournament

The annual Minnesota Armed Forces Hockey Tournament is open for armed services members. Teams may have up to three civilians plus a civilian goalie on the team.

The tourney will be held March 27-29 at the Schwan Super Rink at the National Sports Center in Blaine. There will be 32 teams in the tourney with four divisions.

Entry fee is \$800 per team. The charity Defending the Blue Line will get all the proceeds from the tourney. For more information, call Mike Gile, 763-548-4023 or email mark.gile@outlook.com.

VUMS

Those who entered the service before the legal age can join Volunteers Underage Military Service group. For more information, go to oldvums.org.

Military Ball

The 11th Military Ball in Spring Grove is slated for April 25 at the Fest Building. This year's event will honor the Merchant Marines.

Cocktails and pictures are at 4:30 p.m. with dinner at 5:45 and the program from 8-11:30. Cost is \$27 per person and includes one photo. Dress is "Sunday best" and military uniforms are welcome.

The Cheers Swinging Big Band will again be playing. For more information call 507-498-3461 or email gnljlbux@springgrove.coop. Reservations are required by April 11.

MACV Legal Clinics

The Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans will hold a series of legal clinics across Minnesota. The clinics include such subjects as housing, employment, benefits, expungement, debt collection and family law. They will be staffed by volunteer attorneys, MACV staff, and county veterans service officers. For more information, contact MACV at 651-224-0292. The clinics include:

- Hibbing, Hibbing Memorial Building, Wednesday, March 18, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.
- St. Cloud, St. Cloud VA Medical Center, Building 8, Tuesday, March 24, 10:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.
- Duluth, West Duluth Post 71, 5814 Grand Avenue, Tuesday, March 17, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.
- Minneapolis, Minneapolis VA Medical Center, Flag Atrium Balcony Room, Tuesday, March 10, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Legion Day at Twins

The 15th annual American Legion Family Day at the Twins will be held on Friday, May 15, at 7:10 p.m. The game will feature the Twins vs. the Tampa Bay Rays.

There will be scoreboard recognition of each post represented.

Tickets are \$23 each for Home Plate View. To order, call 1-800-33-twins and hit 0 to speak to an attendant. Phone lines are open during regular business hours and most weekends and evenings when the Twins are playing.

At the start of the call, reference the Legion promotion. You can use a credit card and a \$5 fee will be added to each order. Tickets will be mailed.

For more information, call Nick Corcoran at 612-659-4083 or email nickcorcoran@twinsbaseball.com.

Pine Island Memorial

The Pine Island Post 184 American Legion Memorial is now selling bronze plaques with lettering including the vet-

erans name, branch of service, years of service, etc. The plaques will be mounted on the existing memorial. For more information or a brochure, call the post at 507-356-8991.

Vets Encounter Christ

Veterans Encounter Christ will be holding a retreat for veterans at Holy Family School in Sauk Centre, March 27-29, Friday through Sunday.

Sleeping accommodations are provided. There will be discussion, talks, prayer, liturgy and celebration. For more information, call Jim and Pat Stroot, 320-219-4582 or email: jpstroot1@gmail.com.

Town Hall Meeting

Veterans served by the St. Cloud VA Health Care System are invited to participate in a Town Hall Meeting on Wednesday, March 11, at the VFW Post in Alexandria, 1102 3rd Avenue East at 5 p.m. It will provide veterans with an opportunity to hear from St. Cloud VA officials and ask them questions.

At 4 p.m., veterans can meet with the veterans service officer on benefits. The post will have sloppy Joe's and chips starting at 4 p.m. There will be a free will offering.

SAL Spring Conference

The Sons of the American Legion, Detachment of Minnesota, will hold its annual Spring Conference, March 20-21 at the Anoka Post 102. On Friday evening, the Finance Committee will meet at 7 p.m. followed by the Executive Committee at 8. The post will be serving food.

On Saturday, the conference will convene at 8:30 a.m. Registration is \$10 per person and includes Saturday's lunch. All officers and chairmen are expected to send a written report to Detachment Adjutant Doug Bible by March 14.

SAL members can register online at www.mnsal.org or by emailing Alan Amundson, sal@anokalegion.org.

Red Carpet Welcome

Veterans new to the Minneapolis VA Medical Center and other veterans are welcome to the "Red Carpet Welcome" sessions held each weekday at the hospital at 10 a.m. Check with the information booth to find out where the orientation will start in the Flag Atrium.

Memorial Flag Boxes

Jim Kempenich of Baudette is offering free memorial flag boxes, made of oak, ash or pine, to those families who have received the U.S. flag as part of a funeral service for their loved one. The finish is satin polyurethane and rubbed wax. For more information contact Kempenich at 218-634-1260.

Disabled Vets Turkey Hunt

The 2015 Disabled Veterans Turkey Hunt, co-sponsored by the Minnesota American Legion, will be held May 4-6 at Camp Ripley. Applications can be obtained by writing MN Veterans Outdoor Programs, Box 953, St. Cloud, MN 56302 or going to mn.service.orgs@gmail.com or calling 320-380-4569. The application is also at davmn.org.

The event is sponsored by the Legion, VFW, DAV, Purple Heart and Veterans 4 Veterans.

Spring Fair

The Spring Craft Fair and Bake Sale will be held at the Richfield Post 435 at 6501 Lyndale South from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Sunday, April 19. For more information, call Carol

Larson at 612-481-2148.

St. Cloud VA Meeting

A public meeting for the Homeless Housing Building will be held at the St. Cloud VA Medical Center in Building 48, Room 14, on Wednesday, March 18 beginning at 5 p.m.

The 35-unit facility will be on VA property along 44th Ave. North. The VA facility in St. Cloud is on the National Register of Historic Places, and public input on the historical implications of the new building will be sought.

Parade Entries Sought

Entries for the 2015 Department of Minnesota Parade in Redwood Falls are being sought. The parade will be on Friday evening, July 17.

The local host for the state convention, Redwood Falls Post 38, is hoping for participation from every post in the state in the parade.

Contact Parade Chairman Duane LeBrun for further information, 507-637-2295 or rackitbalz@yahoo.com. Deadline for entries in the parade is July 1. Local and high school band entries are also sought.

Military History Search Aid

The Minnesota Military Museum has added a new archives search aid for historians, researchers and those interested in Minnesota military history. The index can be accessed by going to www.mnmilitarymuseum.org.

Information is available on the site on how to use the index and also guidelines for donating to the museum's collection. The museum is open in the winter from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Thursdays and Fridays.

Berlin Reunion

A reunion for those who served in Berlin will be held in Chattanooga, Tenn., on June 1-5. Veterans are encouraged to join the Berlin US Military Veterans Association. For more information contact Jerry at jerrybryson.com.

Pets Loyal 2 Vets

A non-profit organization, Pets Loyal 2 Vets, has been started with a goal of providing veterans suffering from PTSD or TBI with service dogs. The pets have therapeutic value and are at no cost to the veteran. For more information, go to the website: petsloyal2vets.org.

Nominations Sought

The Camp Ripley Memorialization Board is now accepting nominations for possible candidates to be inducted into the 2015 Court of Honor. Criteria include the nominees be members of the National Guard who are officially recognized for acts of valor or heroism, or those past members of the Guard who have obtained uncommon prestige.

Deadline is April 1. For information or applications, contact Kathleen.m.radziej.ngf@mail.mil.

Let's Go Fishing

The Buffalo Post 270 and the Buffalo Chapter of Let's Go Fishing are partnering to support veterans from St. Cloud and Minneapolis VA hospitals, along with care centers in the Buffalo area with a fishing experience on Lake Pulaski. In the past seven years, over 3,000 veterans have taken part in the program.

For more information, call Jane Drodofsky, at 320-796-5555 or email janed@lgfws.com.

Round Tables

Minnesota round tables for military history have announced their March programs:

-- The St. Croix Valley Civil War Roundtable will feature "Publishing Minnesota and the Civil and Indian Wars" with Mary Bakeman on Monday, March 23. For more information, contact Steve Anderson at 715-386-1268 or rossandhaines@comcast.net.

-- Ft. Snelling World War II History Round Table will feature two programs in March. "The Logistics of War with Dr. Jerry Brown will be the March 12 program. "Return to the Philippines" with Dr. Nathan Prefer will discuss the Leyte campaign. Both programs will feature veterans of World War II. Admission is \$5 and the events are held at the Historic Fort Snelling Visitor Center. Programs begin at 7 p.m.

-- The Rochester Veterans Roundtable will have "Destroyer USS Ingersoll and Aircraft Carrier USS Hornet" on Monday, March 9, at 7 p.m. at the Autumn Ridge Church. Elmo Wojahn and Lenny Jorgenson will speak. Admission is \$5.

-- The Owatonna Veterans Roundtable will feature Ken Axelson, "From the Beach to the Bulge," on Tuesday, March 10, at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church. The meeting is at 7 p.m.

Post history contest entries being sought

Post historians who have spent the last membership year chronicling the activities of their post should start finalizing their entries for the first round of judging in the National Post History Contest, which will take place during department conventions this spring and summer.

Entries in the One-Year Post Narrative and One-Year Post Yearbook categories will be judged by the department historian during the convention.

Only the first-place finisher in each category, certified as such by the department historian, will be sent to National Headquarters in Indianapolis where it will be judged by a group of past and present department and national historians during Fall Meetings, Oct. 12-15.

All department-winning entries must be postmarked to National Headquarters by Sept. 15. Contact your department historian for more information.

The National Department History Contest, for the best narrative and yearbook entries by department historians, will also take place during Fall Meetings and those entries must be postmarked by Sept. 15 as well. Now is also a good

time to start planning a narrative or yearbook for the next membership year.

They can serve as references and templates for future post members to continue the activities and community service that make your post special.

Guidelines and advice can be found in the Post Officer's Guide, beginning on page 145.

See more at: <http://www.legion.org/library/226236/start-working-national-post-history-contest-entries#sthash.XjAmTKjh.dpuf>.

Posts are also encouraged to start their centennial post histories.

Those posts interested in starting and maintaining a post history should go to legion.org/centennial. Workbooks can be downloaded and other information is available.

Post histories can help local communities realize the importance of the Legion post in a community. The compilation of post histories is aimed at the 2018-19 celebration of The American Legion's centennial.

Taps

Goepferd, Harold, 96, Navy veteran of World War II, died Jan. 31, 2015. He was active in his post and in the Department, and was well known for taking blood pressure measurements at Department events, and was credited with saving many lives. He was the husband of Past Department President Marge Goepferd and the father of Past Department President Norma Tramm. He was the 2013 Sixth District Legionnaire of the Year. During the war, he served in both the Atlantic and the Pacific. He was a member of Bertha Post 366.

Beissel, Daniel C., 72, Past Fourth District Commander, died Feb. 11, 2015. He was a Navy veteran of the Vietnam War. He served as a missile technician aboard nuclear submarines. He was Fourth District Commander in 1993-94. He was a past commander of White Bear Lake Post 168.

Lange, Ralph J., 83, Air Force veteran of the Korean War, died Jan. 23, 2015. He was a jet mechanic. He was a member of Upsala Post 350.

Hensen, Richard N., 92, Army veteran of World War II, died Feb. 10, 2015. He was a member of Rush City Post 93.

Galle, John Sr., 87, Navy veteran of World War II, died Feb. 4, 2015. He was a member of Windom Post 206.

Eickman, James P., 73, Army veteran of the Vietnam War, died Feb. 10, 2015. He was a member of Chisago City Post 272.

Hepola, Marvin, 86, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Feb. 6, 2015. He was a member of Park Rapids Post 212.

McCloud, Robert H., 93, Army veteran of World War II, died Feb. 2, 2015. He was a member of Park Rapids Post 212.

Smuda, Benedict, 83, Navy veteran of the Korean War, died Feb. 11, 2015. He was a member of Little Falls Post 46.

Fietek, Clement, 96, Army Air Corps veteran of World War II, died Feb. 17, 2015. He served at Normandy, Northern France, the Rhineland and the Ardennes. He was a member of Little Falls Post 46.

Erie, Loren Virgil, 94, Army veteran of World War II, died Jan. 29, 2015. He was a member of Ashby Post 357.

Dreier, Hilary, 86, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Jan. 30, 2015. He was a member of Fairfax Post 205.

Strechek, Gene F., 80, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Jan. 30, 2015. He served as an honor guard member with the First Infantry Division in Seoul, Korea. He was a past commander and bugler for Silver Lake Post 141.

Miller, James Raymond, 77, Navy veteran of the Korean War, died Jan. 30, 2015. He served in the Pacific on the USS Brinkley Bass DD887. He was a member of Waseca Post 228.

Mavencamp, William A. Sr., 88, Navy veteran of World War II and the Korean War, died Jan. 26, 2015. He was a member of Maple Lake Post 131.

Arntson, James Arnold, 84, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Jan. 16, 2015. He was a POW in North Korea during the length of the war. He was a member of Cloquet Post 262.

Pries, Arthur, 87, Navy veteran of World War II, died Jan. 25, 2015. He was a member of Eyota Post 551.

Loew, Donald, 81, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Jan. 21, 2015. He was a member of Hayfield Post 330.

Witt, Wayne Charles, 86, Navy veteran of the Korean War, died Jan. 11, 2015. He was a corpsman who served with the Marines during the war. He was a member of Kasson Post 295.

Applegate, Dwain W., 97, Army veteran of World War II, died Jan. 20, 2015. He was a military policeman who escorted troops on trains. He was a member of Princeton Post 216.

Eckhoff, Ernest John Henry, 96, Navy veteran of World War II, died Feb. 3, 2015. He was aircraft mechanic in Florida and at Pearl Harbor. He was a past commander of Deer Creek Post 283.

Spanier, Melvin M., 82, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Feb. 1, 2015. He served in Korea as a radio operator. He was a member of Paynesville Post 271.

Rohm, Norman James, 88, Navy veteran of World War II, died Jan. 5, 2015. He was a radioman in fighter-bombers aboard the USS Saratoga. He was a member of Alexandria Post 87.

Rapp, Willis Alfred "Bob," 89, Army veteran of World War II, died Jan. 23, 2015. He was a tire builder with the 4066th Quartermaster Truck Company in Alaska. He was a member of Alexandria Post 87.

Felt, Herman Carl, 89, Army veteran of World War II, died Feb. 8, 2015. He served in Okinawa and later in Korea. He was a member of Alexandria Post 87.

Shultz, Eugene, 72, Air Force veteran of the Vietnam War, died Jan. 25, 2015. He was a member of Bertha Post 366.

Lorenz, Melvin, 96, Army veteran of World War II, died Feb. 5, 2015. He was a member of Bertha Post 366.

Welshaw, John, 72, Navy veteran of the Vietnam War, died Feb. 8, 2015. He was a member of Bertha Post 366.

Dallmann, Armin R., 87, Army veteran of World War II, died Jan. 27, 2015. He served in Italy during the war. He was a membership director, color guard member and long-time adjutant of Wabasso Post 263.

Andres, James J., 84, Navy veteran of the Korean War, died Jan. 31, 2015. He served on the USS Philip. He was a member of Pierz Post 341.

Jurek, Justin J., 85, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Feb. 6, 2015. He was a member of Hillman Post 602.

Schulz, Marvin O., 91, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Feb. 9, 2015. He was a member of Morris Post 29.

Jason, Donald D., 85, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Jan. 13, 2015. He served in the National Guard. He was a member of Lonsdale Post 586.

Winegar, Wallace A. Jr., 93, Navy veteran of World War II, died Jan. 21, 2015. He served in Naval Air. He was a member of Albert Lea Post 56.

Knudsen, Holgar F. Jr. "Buzz," 87, Navy veteran of World War II, died Jan. 24, 2015. He was a member of Albert Lea Post 56.

Borland, Dwight D. Sr., 62, Army veteran of the Vietnam War, died Jan. 29, 2015. He was a member of Albert Lea Post 56.

Jordahl, Myrland N. "Merle," 93, Army veteran of World War II, died Jan. 30, 2015. He was a member of Albert Lea Post 56.

Spoden, Marcus H., 91, veteran of World War II, died Feb. 1, 2015. He was a member of Cold Spring Post 455.

Karsky, Donald J. Sr., 94, Army veteran of World War II, died Jan. 29, 2015. He was a member of North Branch Post 85.

Erlanson, Richard, 90, Navy veteran of World War II, died Jan. 24, 2015. He served in the Pacific. He was a member of Brainerd Post 255.

Queensland, Kenneth, 88, Navy veteran of World War II and Army veteran of the Korean War, died Jan. 29, 2015. He was a member of Blue Earth Post 89.

Kloeckl, Paul Joseph, 85, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Jan. 18, 2015. He was a paratrooper in the 11th Airborne Division and served in Germany. He was a member of Gaylord Post 433.

Carter, Russell, 91, Army veteran of World War II, died Jan. 25, 2015. He served in the Aleutian Islands. He was a member of Park Rapids Post 212.

Nelson, Clarence, 91, Army veteran of World War II, died Jan. 22, 2015. He was a member of Park Rapids Post 212.

Nielson, Roger A., 79, Air Force veteran of the Vietnam War, died Jan. 31, 2015. He served for 20 years. He was a member of Deerwood Post 557.

Jirousek, Victor F., 91, Army Air Corps veteran of World War II, died Jan. 7, 2015. He was a member of Faribault Post 43.

Schrieber, Luverne W., 89, Navy veteran of World War II, died Jan. 4, 2015. He was a past commander of Claremont Post 422.

Gustafson, Harold R. "Kelley," 85 Army veteran of the Korean War, died Jan. 24, 2015. He was a member of the Army Drum Corps. He was a member of Faribault Post 43.

Kovatch, Gladys M., 95, Army veteran of World War II, died Jan. 20, 2015. She served as a nurse. She was a member of Faribault Post 43.

Cates, Dean P., 87, Navy veteran of World War II, died Jan. 8, 2015. He was a member of Faribault Post 43.

Peterson, William, 85, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Jan. 23, 2015. He was a member of Chanhassen Post 580.

Strange, Leonard A., 89, Navy veteran of World War II, died Jan. 17, 2015. He was a Navy combat medic and served with the Marines. He was a member of Winona Post 9.

Bulger, William J., 87, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Jan. 17, 2015. He served in the 44th Infantry Division, 129th Regiment, 1st Battalion. He was held as a prisoner of war for one week by the communists, and then released. He earned two Bronze Stars. He was a member of Thief River Falls Post 117.

Hager, Raymond "Fritz," 98, Navy veteran of World War II, died Feb. 3, 2015. He was a first class motor machinist on the USS Southhampton (AKA 66). He was a member of Fulda Post 318.

Bosacker, Jay D., 95, Army veteran of World War II, died Jan. 26, 2015. He was a member of Tracy Post 173.

DeMorret, Lawrence L., 83, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Jan. 27, 2015. He was a color guard member of Sandstone Post 151.

Krona, Sheldon K., 70, Army veteran of the Vietnam War, died Feb. 14, 2015. He served in the 1st Cavalry Division including a tour in Vietnam. He was a member of Chisago City Post 272.

Ampe, Charles A., 91, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Feb. 16, 2015. He was a member of Paynesville Post 271.

Gronseth, Howard E., 84, Navy veteran of the Korean War, died Feb. 18, 2015. He was a member of Windom Post 206.

Kiler, Kenneth L., 66, Marine Corps veteran of the Vietnam War, died Feb. 26, 2015. He was a member of Hackensack Post 202.

Johnson, Myron "Mike," 94, Navy veteran of World War II, died Feb. 20, 2015. He was a founding member of Zimmerman Post 560.

Stefansen, Arnold Carl, 88, Army veteran of World War

II, died Feb. 11, 2015. He was a member of Tyler Post 185.

Shubat, Emil F., 92, Army veteran of World War II, died Jan. 11, 2015. He was a member of Keewatin Post 452.

Duffney, Ambrose, 89, Army veteran of World War II, died Feb. 8, 2015. He was a member of Lonsdale Post 586.

Bernhardt, Warde H., 90, Army Air Corps veteran of World War II, died Jan. 10, 2015. He was a flight engineer on an B-24 bomber serving in Europe. He was a member of Richfield Post 435.

Amdahl, Orval Howard, 95, Marine Corps veteran of World War II, died Feb. 17, 2015. He served two tours in the Pacific totaling 31 months. He served in Nagasaki, Japan, at the end of his first tour. Recently he returned a sword to the son of the original owner in Nagasaki. He was a member of Lanesboro Post 40.

Thomas, Lyle Raymond, 82, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Jan. 26, 2015. He served in Europe. He was a member of Preston Post 166.

Waller, Virgil Ora, 87, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Jan. 21, 2015. He was a member of Granite Falls Post 69.

Obituary policy

Updated: February 2006

Obituaries of members of the Legion Family will be published in the Minnesota Legionnaire in a monthly column under the heading "Taps."

Obituaries must be recent, within the last two months prior to the publication of the new edition of the Legionnaire. For example, the February edition would only contain obituaries from January and December.

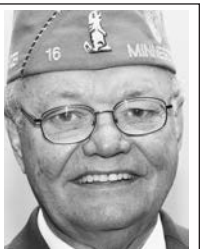
While the obituaries are brief, the Legionnaire does seek certain information for our readers:

1. Complete name of deceased.
2. Age at death.
3. Branch of service and war or wars the veteran served in.
4. Exact date of death.
5. Additional information about the veteran's service background including unit, type of service, place of service, medals, etc.
6. The post, unit or squadron the deceased belonged to.
7. Additional information about Legion service including officer posts held.

The Legionnaire reserves the right to edit all obituaries for style and brevity.

Sons of The American Legion

By
Dennis Henkemeyer



First of all, on behalf of the almost 11,000 members of the Detachment of Minnesota, I would like to wish The American Legion a very Happy 96th Birthday. America has enjoyed years of our veterans advancing the principles of the four pillars of a great organization. So often I sit back and wonder what our towns and states and nation would be without The American Legion. I often wonder why veterans fail to realize what we do and don't bother to join.

I want to take this opportunity to remind all of the SAL members in the Detachment of Minnesota that it won't be long and we will be coming together for our annual Spring Conference. This year it will be hosted by the Anoka Sons of The American Legion with the finance committee meeting on Friday, 20 March 2015 at 7:00pm and the detachment executive committee meeting at 8:00pm on that same day. Then on Saturday, 21 March 2015, the general session will be called to order at 8:30 a.m. Just a reminder to all officers and committeemen that you need to get your written report to Detachment Adjutant no later than 5:00pm on Saturday, March 14th.

The Detachment of Minnesota continues to PROPEL TO THE TOP with membership. As of this writing, we are number six in the nation and number one in the Central Region. In addition, we are number three nationally for percentage of renewals. Sometime ago, Detachment Membership Director Paul Spyhalski told our members that he and I would walk in the Bataan Memorial Death March in Brainerd later this summer if we hit 11,000 members. That is twenty miles! Not sure that I ever made a commitment to him in advance, but I am still up to the challenge. If you would care to join us, more information can be found on our Facebook page: Sons of The American Legion Detachment of Minnesota.

Finally, just a friendly reminder that the detachment commander's project for the Minneapolis Fisher House could still use additional money.



Dick Jonckowski, the public address announcer for Gopher basketball and baseball, brought a note of levity to the Sweetheart Rally. He had them rolling in the aisles. Jonckowski is also the emcee at the national baseball banquet at the American Legion World Series each year.

Sweetheart Rally in Chanhassen



Commander Peggy Moon and Membership Director Pat Logan helped run the Sweetheart Rally.

The Sixth District continued its strangle hold on first place in the membership standings at the Sweetheart Rally held in Chanhassen.

The district wound up with 92.75 percent of goal at the rally, and District Membership Director Jim Lucas took home another prize. The Ninth District was in second place with 91.90 percent.

Overall the Department was at 90.75 percent for the rally.

The Seventh District was in first place for the Auxiliary with 80.18 percent. The Second District was second with 79.31 percent.

The Auxiliary was in sixth place in the nation with 78.15 percent.

The Second District led the SAL membership drive with 95.53 percent with the Third District at 90.08 percent at the rally.

The rally was highlighted by a comedy routine by Dick Jonckowski, the self-annointed "Polish Eagle." Jonckowski is the public address announcer for Minnesota Gopher Basketball and Baseball. He also announces The American Legion World Series each year.

The rally drew a full house at the Chanhassen Post. The post will be hosting the Minnesota American Legion Division I Baseball Tournament this summer, and it was announced that the post is planning several special events for the tourney.



Samsung Scholarship winner Jonathan Mullen of Andover was honored at the rally for winning the \$20,000 Samsung Scholarship in connection with Boys State. From left, Tom and Patti Mullen, Minnesota Boys State Dean David Way, Mullen, Department Commander Peggy Moon. Mullen is a senior at Andover High School and was sponsored by Anoka Post 102. The Auxiliary also had a national Samsung Winner, Heidi Bau, but she couldn't be present for the presentation.

Membership Chart As of February 25, 2015

District	2015 Goal	Total 2014	Total 2015	Percent of Goal	Same Date '14
1	9,976	9,918	9,229	92.51	9,457
2	8,110	8,026	7,452	92.05	7,739
3	12,486	12,421	11,612	93.00	11,811
4	2,554	2,530	2,397	93.85	2,430
5	2,959	2,936	2,680	90.57	2,792
6	12,698	12,627	11,842	92.26	12,031
7	7,245	7,167	6,642	91.68	6,875
8	4,768	4,727	4,306	90.31	4,513
9	7,443	7,378	6,909	92.83	7,085
10	11,243	11,189	10,496	93.36	10,682
At-large	2,340	2,338	2,482	78.58	2,215
Totals	81,822	81,257	76,047	92.04	77,630



Those who spoke at the program for Shop, Ship and Share program, sponsored by the Fourth and Fifth Districts this past year, received special personalized stamps from the U.S. Postal Service. From left: SAL Detachment Commander Dennis Henkemeyer, Department Commander Peggy Moon, Fourth District Commander Dan Williams, who presented the stamps, and the Fourth District's John Grams who received the collection for Steve Campos



Past National Commander Dan Ludwig of Red Wing discusses legislative issues with Gabriel Sanchez, legislative fellow in the office of Rep. John Kline, R-Minn., at the Library of Congress. Minnesota hosted a reception for the Minnesota congressional offices at the Members Room of the Library. In the middle is Department Service Officer Tom Newman.

The Washington Conference



Secretary of Veterans Affairs Bob McDonald held an impromptu news conference after he misspoke about his service record to a homeless veteran. McDonald holds up a chart explaining the problems the VA is facing.



Members of the Minnesota delegation took time for a group picture during the reception for Minnesota congressmen and their staffs at the Members Room of the Library of Congress.



A reception for lawmakers and their staff was held at the Library of Congress. Legislative Chairman Bob Hart and Department Commander Peggy Moon stood at the podium.



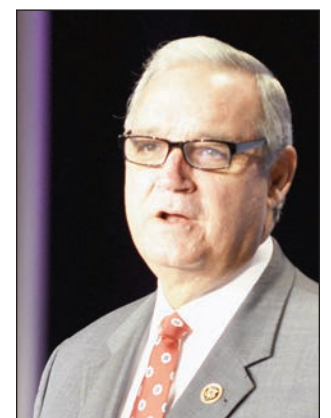
Former Minnesotan and National Vice Commander Richard Neville asked a question at the McDonald news conference.



Sen. Richard Blumenthal, D-Conn., is the ranking member of the veterans panel.



Sen. Johnny Isakson, R-Ga., chair of the Senate vets panel, was on hand.



Rep. Jeff Miller, R-Fla., Veteran's Affairs Committee chair, spoke.



Rep. Collin Peterson, D-Minn., talked over veterans legislative priorities with Denise Milton and Carl Moon.



Ryan Huff, legislative assistant for Rep. Erik Paulsen, R-Minn., discussed the Legion's priorities with Department President Chris Ronning and Alternate NECman Marland Ronning.



Will Mitchell of Rep. Rick Nolan's office, took notes as Jeff Olson listed the Legion's legislative wish list. Also at the table at the Library of Congress were NECman Ray DeZurik, Wilson Spence, and Sharon Thiemecke.



Sen. Al Franken, D-Minn., spoke with a Minnesota Legion delegation at his office in Washington.



Sen. Amy Klobuchar, D-Minn., was provided with a listing of legislative priorities by a delegation from Minnesota.

The American Legion's national legislative priorities

Provide help for veterans struggling with mental health issues and brain injuries

The American Legion has dedicated extensive resources to studying the devastating effects of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI). Additional resources and alternative treatments must be provided as options for veterans and servicemembers in need of treatment for brain injuries and mental stress.

Ensure transition programs are not adversely affected by sequestration

Sequestration cuts are having an impact on servicemen and women who are transitioning to the civilian world. The primary issue is that Transition Assistance Programs (TAP) face budget shortfalls as Department of Defense funds are being squeezed to accommodate security goals. At the same time, reductions in force strength are forcing more servicemembers out. Congress must act to reverse these cuts and ensure that transitioning servicemembers are able to make contributions in the civilian workforce.

Create opportunities for veterans in the private sector

The Legion calls on Congress to implement a proposed pilot program that would subsidize businesses and non-profit organizations that create on-the-job training opportunities for veterans. Additionally, extend and improve the Work Opportunity Tax Credit for hiring veterans under the VOW Act.

Provide top education through Post-9/11 GI Bill

As the founding author of the original GI Bill, The American Legion is continuing to press for legislation to help transitioning servicemembers receive quality education benefits. The Legion believes that veterans should be allowed to convert GI Bill education funds into capital for business start-ups. These grants would further the goal of growing the veteran-owned small business industry, which, in turn, would generate jobs for veterans.

Fully fund a superior national defense as the global war on terror rages on

The global war on terrorism is continuing to pose a threat to America's security and national interests. It is critical to maintain a well-funded Department of Defense to ensure a strong national defense to protect America and its allies from enemies such as the Islamic State. Additionally, The American Legion strongly advocates for a good quality of life for troops and a sensible transition from military service to civilian life. The Legion vows to hold our elected leaders responsible and fight against those who seek to jeopardize the benefits promised to past, present and future servicemembers. The severity of sequester cuts has been lessened, however force reductions continue and the military remains in a recovery mode after absorbing recent dramatic cuts.

Continue efforts to reform VA

When news broke about veterans dying while waiting for VA appointments and secret wait lists, The American Legion led the way in championing reform. Last year's passage of the Veterans Access Choice and Accountability Act was a promising first step. But there is need for continued improvement and reform such as strengthening the oversight program. Veterans must have faith that the health-care system designed for them will be there to meet their needs.

Support more efficient VA claims systems

The American Legion calls on Congress to support VBA's ongoing transformation of the benefits claims processing system, while providing aggressive oversight to ensure it is completed properly, with sufficient funding to finish developing and deploying its new Veterans Benefits Management System, as well as support for the complete digital conversion of all active paper claims files.

End veteran homelessness

The American Legion believes that not a single man or woman who has defended our nation should be forced to sleep on the streets at night. The Legion supports the goal of eliminating veterans' homelessness by 2015 and calls on Congress to pledge necessary resources to accomplish this goal, including medical, rehabilitative and employment assistance to homeless veterans and their families. The programs in place are working. It is essential that their funding continues in order to eradicate this problem.

Oppose further increases in TRICARE fees, including prescription drug fees

The American Legion opposes any measures that would further dilute benefits including TRICARE coverage and military retiree benefits. Increased out-of-pocket costs to individual military retirees, including higher prescription co-payments, devalue incentives for military careers.

Repeal unfair offsets that penalize disabled veterans and widows

VA disability compensation should not be offset from military retired pay regardless of the VA rating percentage, nor should VA survivor benefits (DIC) be offset from military Survivor Benefit Plan annuities. The American Legion supports legislation that would repeal those unjust offsets now.

Protect the American Flag

The American Legion remains committed to protecting Old Glory, and continues to support legislation that safeguards our nation's flag from physical desecration.

Helping America win the war in a segregated army

Wayne Glanton was a skilled surveyor and Army engineer, but he served his country in an Army where he could not ride in the same train car or eat in the same chow hall as his white comrades. He now serves, at age 92, as Minnesota's Fifth District American Legion Commander.

By Al Zdon

When Wayne Glanton showed up at his first duty station in 1943 after Army training, the officer looked at him in horror. He told Glanton there must be some mistake. Actually, the mistake had been made sometime before. Someone had forgotten to indicate in Glanton's service record that he was an African-American. When he showed up at Eglin Air Base in Florida, he had been sent to an all-white unit.

The Army didn't do that in those days, nor did they do that throughout the war. Segregation was the unchallenged rule.

Glanton has a lot of good stories to tell about his time in the service, but his overall impression of those years is not positive. "The Army was a terrible place, a horrible place."

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Wayne Glanton grew up in south Minneapolis, the son of an auto mechanic who worked for Studebaker Sales.

He got his interest in the construction trades through his uncle who was a building contractor. "I was 12 years old, but I learned about nails and tools. Mostly, it was just 'Bring me this board,' or 'Bring me that board,' but I learned.

Along the way, Glanton also went door to door selling newspaper subscriptions for the *Minneapolis Spokesman*, the black newspaper for the city. "I'd go up to the door and say, 'Did you know that so-and-so died?' and they'd say 'No.' I'd tell them they'd better subscribe to the Spokesman so they'd know what was going on." He said that sales experience helped out later when he owned his own construction business.

The construction apprenticeship continued through his high school years at Minneapolis Central and then during his technical school time at Dunwoody.

"I remember this one house we built on 66th and Normandale Road. It was a huge house with a three or four stall garage. It was my job to put in the parquet floor in the house. The only tools I had were a hand saw and a miter box. I started working on the floor and I thought I was doing pretty good, but then the boss came by. He said, 'This will never do,' and he tore up all my work.

"After that they showed me how to do it, and how to cut the pieces exactly straight. By the time I got done with that job, I was an expert. But it was such hard work. I'd ride my bicycle to the job, and I'd have to stop halfway home just to rest."

The small neighborhood Glanton grew up in was nearly all black. "It was a good neighborhood. People knew you. When you went to the grocery store, they just kept track of the bills. On Saturday, my dad would go around and pay everybody off."

Straying too far from the neighborhood could be dangerous. "There were some Swedes who didn't like us very much. My dad told me never to fight them because I could always outrun them."

After high school graduation in 1941, Glanton began studies at Dunwoody. He was there when Pearl Harbor changed the lives of nearly everyone in America. "Pretty soon the school was full of recruiters. They sat me down and asked me if I wanted to go into the Army, the Navy or the Marines. I said all I wanted to do was finish my two years at Dunwoody."

When his draft notice arrived, that was the end of his

studies. "In the end, all the white boys got deferments and all the black students went to war. It was just the way it was."

Basic training was at Jefferson Barracks in Missouri. "We got on the train in Minneapolis and we got into a nice car. Pretty soon they came along and told us we had to move up to the car behind the engine. It was the segregated car. So we were up there and I could see they were loading these guys with uniforms on into the car we had been in. I asked the porter who they were putting in that car, and he told me it was German prisoners. They kicked us out and put German POWs in that car."

As was his experience throughout the war, the officers in charge at Jefferson Barracks were all white and the non-commissioned officers were all black. "And, of course, those officers didn't want to be there."

Basic training was "worse than terrible. Fights all the time. But I did what I had to do to get through it."

Glanton's next stop in his Army career was Fort Belvoir in Virginia where he went to engineering school. His time at Dunwoody had given him a good foundation. "I didn't learn anything about engineering at the school except how to do it the Army way."

Classes were integrated, but the soldiers slept in segregated barracks.

Upon graduation, he was sent to Eglin Field, an Army Air Corps base in Florida. "I went to the gate and showed him my orders and he sent me to the captain. I went to the orderly room, and the captain looked me up and down. He said, 'I've got to get the major.' The major came in and stared at me. He finally said, 'We can't use you here. There's been some mistake.'

"Well, the mistake they made was that someone forgot to mark on my paperwork that I was black. And this was a



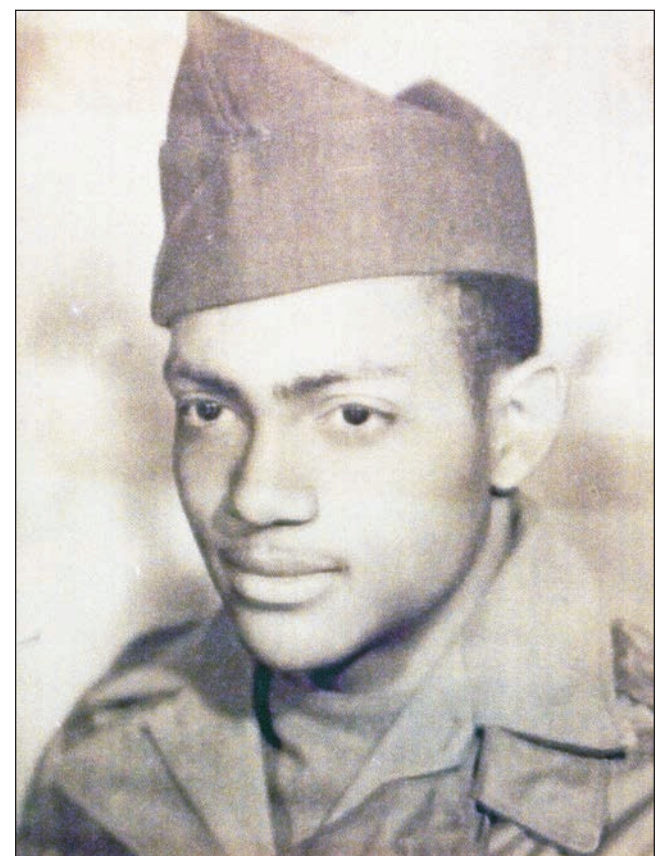
white unit."

Glanton was given a cot in a supply tent on the base while the Army tried to figure out what to do with him. "It wasn't bad. There was a hoop nearby so I could go and shoot baskets, but mostly I just sat around and read. They brought all my meals to the tent because I wasn't allowed to use the chow hall."

The Army finally assigned Glanton to the 1898th Engineer Aviation Battalion at Eglin, an all-black construction unit. During the war, 42 percent of American engineering units were made up of African-American soldiers.



WAYNE GLANTON
At home in Minneapolis



WAYNE GLANTON
In the Army Air Corps during World War II