



# Legionnaire

Volume 96, Number 5

For God and Country

May 2014

## Bills would rehab more of Fort Snelling's Upper Post

By Al Zdon

Slowly, slowly the historic Upper Post at Fort Snelling is finding new life.

The Upper Post was shut down by the federal government in 1946, at the end of World War II, and dozens of buildings, large and small, have been sitting abandoned since then. Some have collapsed, mainly from water damage.

Many, built with brick, are in remarkably good shape considering the neglect.

This past year, a project that will house 58 homeless Minnesota veterans was announced. A joint effort of the Veterans Administration and a state housing developer, Common Bond, the project would spend \$11.2 million to rehab two large horse barns and two other buildings on the Upper Post.

Two bills in this session of the Minnesota Legislature could mean further progress in the effort to find new uses for the historic buildings.

One bill (Senate File 1505 and House File 1583) calling for \$2 million in bonding would develop new infrastructure for parts of the Upper Post including new sewers, sidewalks, streets, lighting, and water mains. Hennepin County would administer the funds.

The second bill (SF 2113 and HF2643) would appropriate \$6.7 million in bonding to rehab the Fort's old Administration Building, sometimes called the clock tower building. The funding, however, would be contingent on \$13.4 million being raised from non-state sources to rehab a barracks building near the Administration Building.

A prime facilitator in the projects is the M.A. Mortenson Company, one of the largest construction companies in the state and the builder of the new Vikings Stadium in down-

Continued on Page 2



**REHAB POSSIBILITY?** -- The Administration Building at the Upper Post at Fort Snelling could be the target of \$6.7 million in state rehabilitation money if a bill in the Minnesota Legislature passes. The fort was decommissioned in 1946 and many of the dozens of buildings have stood empty since then. Generals at the fort could look over the troops on parade across the street through the large window on the second floor of the clock tower.

## Rochester gets ready for 2014 State Convention

Rochester will host the 2014 Minnesota American Legion and Auxiliary conventions.

The conventions will be held July 17-19. The Legion meeting will be at the Mayo Civic Center and the Auxiliary will convene at the Kahler Grand Hotel.

Two hotels have been designated for the convention, and delegates and others must make their own reservations. The Kahler Grand Hotel has rooms for \$79, \$89, \$129 and \$299. For reservations, call 1-800-533-1655. The Kahler Inn and Suites has rooms for \$89 and reservations can be made at the same number.

A registration form is on page 2 of this issue and there is a \$15 registration fee per person. That will go up to \$18 at the door.

There is complimentary parking in the Kahler

Continued on Page 2

## WITNESS TO BUCHENWALD:

## MINNESOTA SOLDIER SAW IT FIRSTHAND

PAGES 8-10



The Administrative Building, or "clock tower building" is shown during its heyday of service in World War II.



**TODD FRANK**  
Law Officer of the Year

## Officers of the Year chosen by Legion

Two North Branch public servants have been chosen by the Minnesota American Legion Law and Order Committee as Law Officer of the Year and Firefighter of the Year.

Todd Frank, an investigator for the North Branch Police Department, won the law officer honors. Mitch Holmes, a public educator in the North Branch Fire Department, earned the top firefighter award.

Both were sponsored by North Branch Post 85.

Frank has been in police work for 25 years. He earned a degree in law enforcement from Alexandria Technical College in 1988 and began work as a patrol officer and later an investigator for Cambridge Police Department.

He was a part-time officer for Metro Transit, and since 1997 has been an officer at North Branch. He has been the primary investigator for 15 years and has investigated many high-profile and complex cases.

Continued on Page 3



**MITCH HOLMES**  
Firefighter of the Year

# Upper Post rehab

Continued from Page 1

town Minneapolis.

Brad Lis, a director of development with Mortenson, said the idea for redeveloping the Fort has the approval of Mort Mortenson, chairman, and David Mortenson, president of the company. Both are Navy veterans.

Members of the family had been using the nearby athletic facilities at the Upper Post and had discussed that it was too bad that no one had ever found a use for the buildings, Lis said.

He said the first key to the project is the bonding for the new sewer and water lines and other infrastructure. "We need a functional sewer system. The other one just broke down over the years. This is the piece that has to happen before any of the rest can be done."

The renovation of the Administration Building will result in a multi-use building that would include an interpretive center explaining the significance of the Upper Post. The building would also house offices and the administrative offices of the Upper Mississippi Academy.

The academy is also a key player in the planning. It is through them that the \$13.4 million in funding, though school credits and other sources, must be obtained in order for the state to release the funds for the Administration Building.

It's a complicated scheme, but Lis said Mortenson is pushing ahead with no thought of making a profit on the project. If one barracks building is rehabbed, there are two more available for new uses, along with a host of other buildings of various sizes and shapes. Across the street are the famous officer quarters.

At the present time, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources controls the property. It was turned over to the state when the military shut down the fort 68 years ago.

The DNR has received state money to put new roofs on several of the buildings in order to keep them from deteriorating further.

Lis said once projects get going, a large amount of outdoor activities can be also developed on the Upper Post, which is adjacent to the Minnesota River. He said both the DNR and the National Park Service could be involved.

Right now both bills have been forwarded to finance committees, but have not moved any further in the legislative process. The Senate bills' main sponsor is Sen. Patricia Torres Ray, DFL-Minneapolis.

Fort Snelling's history dates back to Lt. Zebulon Pike who purchased 100,000 acres from the native tribes in 1805. The Army first occupied the site, which overlooks the confluence of the Mississippi and Minnesota Rivers, in



A major part of the plan would be to convert this barracks building, just to the west of the clock tower, to house a charter school. Two more barracks buildings beyond this building could also be developed in the future.

1819.

Fort Snelling was completed in 1825 and was named after the Army colonel who was the commander and architect during the several years of construction. The original fort with its iconic round tower is part of what is now called the Lower Post.

During the Civil War, the fort was a processing and training center for 24,000 Minnesotans who fought in the war. It had a similar use for the Spanish American War and World War I. During all those years, it had a purpose as a post for the regular Army.

During World War II, the Upper Post became the administrative center for the region, and over 300,000 soldiers were inducted and processed there. The soldiers only stayed at the Fort for a short time before being sent other places for training.

The officers in charge of the Fort could review the troops from the large window on the clock tower of the Administration Building.

The Fort also housed training for military police, for Norwegian-speaking soldiers, and as the Military

Intelligence Service School, a place where thousands of Nisei, second-generation Japanese-Americans, learned languages to serve in the Pacific war.

Once the war ended, the Army had no use for the Fort any longer, and it was decommissioned and given to the state.

Dozens of plans to make use of the buildings have come and gone through the years. The Lower Post has been developed into one of Minnesota's primary tourist destinations. The Upper Post is still waiting for its new destiny.

# Rochester Convention

Continued from Page 1

Grand and Center Street ramps.

On Wednesday, July 16, there will be registration at Post 92 in Rochester. The post will also host a burger night on Wednesday at 5 followed by karaoke or a band at 7. Thursday, there will be a light lunch at noon and a band or karaoke at 7. The schedule will be the same on Friday, and on Saturday there will be the new commander's and new president's receptions following the close of the conventions.

There will be shuttle service throughout the week from the post to the hotels and convention sites. The schedule will be announced later.

The hospitality rooms on Friday night will be at the Windsor Hall in the basement level of the Kahler hotels. A parade route for Friday night has not yet been determined.

The Auxiliary special guest will be National Northwest Division Vice President Pat Steranka of Colorado.

An executive committee meeting will be held in conjunction with the convention.

## OFFICIAL CONVENTION PRE-REGISTRATION

A registration fee of \$15 for each person attending, whether a delegate, alternate or a guest, must accompany this form. Make this check payable to POST 92 CONVENTION FUND. No credit cards will be accepted.

Registration at the door will be \$18.

Mail to:  
**Bill Born, American Legion Post 92 Office, 403 East Center St. Rochester, MN 55904**

Legion Post # \_\_\_\_\_ SAL Sqdn. \_\_\_\_\_ Auxiliary Unit \_\_\_\_\_

District \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Delegate  Alternate  Guest

Delegate at Large (Auxiliary)

(Please check one of the above.)

If additional pre-registrations accompany this request, this pre-registration form should be photo copied for each person. The \$15 registration fee should be enclosed for each person.

# Minnesota wins Big 12 competition

The Department of Minnesota took first place in Category II of the Big 12 membership competition at National.

Each year, the commanders from the various departments bid on what they think their membership percentage will be on a certain date. If you bid too high, and don't make it, you are out of the competition.

Minnesota won \$2,000 in the competition and the money will be used for electronic equipment or software in the area of membership.

"Big thanks to Misty Padilla and Laura Weber who work the numbers and provide the adjutant and the commander with recommended percentages based on history," Department Adjutant Randy Tesdahl said. "With the exception of a second place last year and missing it a couple of years ago, they have put us in the winner's circle with good regularity."

Among those who qualified, Minnesota beat out Michigan for the top percentage.

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# Officers of Year named

Continued from Page 1

He also assists as a trainer in force, tactical operations and is an expert in departmental and state policy.

He has received many letters of commendation, and he has been active in local charities and groups.

Don Meyer, chief of North Branch Police, said, "His tenacity and thoroughness has directly led to the arrest and conviction of many criminals including several child predators, and he is commended for helping to create a safer community."

Frank lives in Lindstrom with his teenage daughter and is a member of St. Bridget of Sweden Catholic Church.

Holmes has been a member of the North Branch Fire Department for seven years.

He and his wife, Jill, have been married for 26 years and own a business, Holmes Repair. He is a member of the North Branch and Stacy dive team.

Holmes spends many hours in the community educating people on fire safety and fire prevention. He coordinates all public events for the fire department including tours, open houses, and demonstrations.

Fire Chief Kevin Grote said, "Mitch has taken the first year enthusiasm and has continued it every year he has been on the department."

The two have been invited to the Department Convention in Rochester, and their applications will be forwarded to the national organization for further consideration.

# Photo contest looking for pictures from time in service

The sixth annual Minnesota American Legion Photo Calendar Contest is now underway.

Again this year, the contest will call for photographs that veterans shot while they were in the service.

Entries will be due by July 1, and the 12 winners will have their photo printed in the annual state Legion calendar. There will also be cash prizes for the photos judged to be the top three winners.

Top prize will be \$250, second prize will be \$150 and third prize will be \$100.

The winning photograph will be on the cover of the calendar.

There is no restriction on the type of photo that is submitted. It can be a group shot, a scenery shot, a view of everyday life, or even an action/combat photo. Entrants can submit up to three photos.

Please do not send originals. Scan or reprint the photos before submitting. Photos will not be returned.

Resolution on photos submitted electronically should be at least 200 dpi.

Here are the rules:

1. All photos must have been taken while the veteran was serving in the Armed Forces. Family members can submit photos from an immediate family member, as long as the person submitting is a current member of the Legion, Auxiliary or Sons of the American Legion. For instance, a Legion Family member can submit a photo taken by a grandfather in World War I.

2. Photos may be entered by mailing them to the Department: Room 300A, 20 West 12th Street, St. Paul, MN 55155. Or

emailing to [azdon@mnlegion.org](mailto:azdon@mnlegion.org). Again, do not send original photographs. Photos will not be returned. Please mark the outside of the envelope or the subject line as "Photo Contest."

3. Entries will be judged not only on the unique quality and interest in the photo, but also by its technical merit.

4. All entries must be postmarked by June 30, 2014, or have been emailed by July 1, 2014.

5. All photos must be original and copyright free and be available to be printed in the calendar without legal encumbrance.

6. All entries must contain as much relevant data as possible, such as who, what, where and when. If there's a story that goes with the photo, please send it along.

7. Photographs may be from any war era.

8. The limit per person is three photographs.

9. Those submitting must include their name, which Legion organization they belong to, their Legion, Auxiliary or SAL ID number, their address, and their contact

# Panel picks Memorial Scholarship winners

This year's Department of Minnesota Memorial Scholarship winners have been selected by the Americanism Committee.

Winners of the 2014 American Legion Memorial Scholarships were:

-- Michael Chervenak, St. Paul, attending Minnesota State University at Moorhead, sponsored by Rosetown Post 542.

-- Mark Geerdes, Northhome, attending Bemidji State University, sponsored by Kelliher Post 470.

-- Teresa Horton, Sebeka, attending the University Jamestown, ND, sponsored by Sebeka Post 456.

-- Hayley Johnson, Sturgeon Lake, attending the University of St. Thomas, sponsored by Denham Post 361.

-- Damian Lofstrom, Strandquist, attending Northland Community College, Thief River Falls, sponsored by Strandquist Post 466.

-- Karlee Pfaff, New Ulm, attending the College of St. Benedict, St. Joseph, sponsored by New Ulm Post 132.

The scholarships provide a student \$500 for college expenses.

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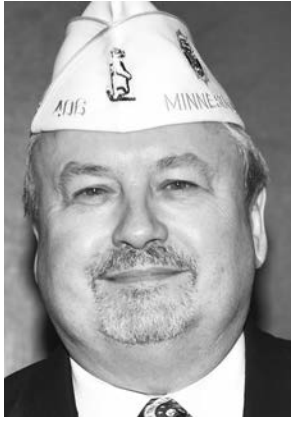
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## COMMANDER'S COLUMN

By Mike Ash



Just received the latest statistics concerning Consolidated Post Reports (CPR) and we're lagging behind last year. A majority of posts are behind in turning in their CPRs and we need to have everyone reading this column to get to your post and push to have a CPR turned in as soon as possible.

I'm asking that District commanders push for a turn-in from every post. The report is one of the most important The American Legion uses to show our progress as an organization. There are 109 different categories that you can check off and even for the smaller posts, it's almost a sure bet that one of the members does something during the year that needs to be marked on the report.

This report is not only used by the National organization to report to Congress on what The American Legion does, but it can be a great tool for you to use as well. When talking to perspective members, this report can give you facts and figures on Legion accomplishments concerning our programs – throughout the state and nation. If you have any

## Mail Call

### Kermit Swanson

To the Editor:

Our veterans have fascinating stories to tell and The Minnesota Legionnaire consistently does a superb job in bringing them to us. Your outstanding article on WWII glider pilot Kermit Swanson is no exception. It also was of special interest to me for two reasons: (1) for thirty years I flew sport gliders as a member of the Minnesota Soaring Club and know what it is like to come in for a landing and know that you can't salvage a bad approach by throwing on the coal and going around for another try, and (2) one of my commanding officers had been an enlisted paratrooper with the 82nd Airborne Division in WWII. He parachuted in on D-Day and glided into Operation Market Garden. He explained why so many gliders landed miles short of their planned landing zones. Like Swanson in Operation Varsity, his glider was hit by flak and the pilot was severely wounded. After a few minutes the pilot announced he was going to release from tow so he could land before he passed out. My CO said he was the first out of the glider and as he lay in the field, rifle ready, he heard swish, swish, swish. The following gliders had seen his glider land and thought it had to be the landing zone.

By the time you get this letter you probably have had dozens of calls and letters as to two mistakes in one of the

questions contact you post/district officers, our Department staff or me.

I just returned from Charlotte, NC - site for the 2014 National Convention to check on the local accommodations. Some things you should know - anyone can attend the National Convention. The sites are chosen by the National Executive Committee 3-5 years prior to the convention - they also designate which states will stay in which hotel and negotiate pricing. (Our hotel is the Sheraton Charlotte Hotel at 555 McDowell, and room rates will be about \$135 a night and parking is \$13 a day or \$25/day if you use valet.) We're checking on discounted weekly rates.

As we get more information we will get it out to you via Facebook and your district commanders. This information may be reflected in this Legionnaire, but as communication is my mantra - and I've heard some misinformation circulating - I'm continuing to try to keep everyone current both here and through social media.

In the membership arena - we are within reach -- barely missing the 95% for Department (and thereby slipping a bit on the National standings). As Membership Director Tom pointed out at the last rally, even at number 26, we have more members that 24 of those Departments who have a higher percentage. Additionally, we have a higher "market penetration" than the majority, including the one "larger" Department - example: If that larger Department over us reaches 100% they have recruited less than 10% of the eligible veterans in their state - Minnesota at 94% has recruited 35% of the eligibles.

This does not mean we can rest on our laurels. Let's get out there and continue to bring in those veterans who don't know about the best kept secret for veterans out there - the programs and people who make up the greatest veteran's organization in the world - The American Legion.

photo captions: the submachine gun Swanson is holding is not a Thompson, but an M-3, nicknamed "the grease gun," and both the Thompson and the M-3 are fully automatic, not semi-automatic. The M-1 Garand, M-1 carbine and 1911/1917 automatic pistol are semi-automatic requiring a trigger pull to fire each shot while the Thompson and M-3 will continue firing while the trigger is held.

Raymond C. Ploetz  
Hanover, MN

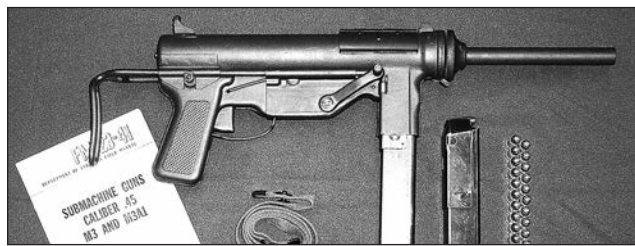
### Grease Gun

To the Editor

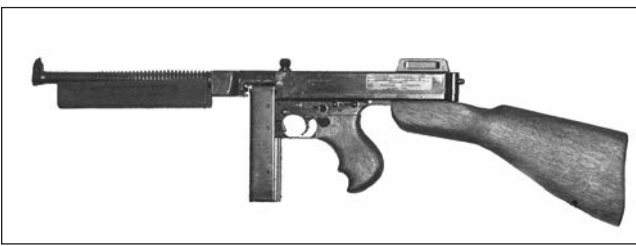
I look forward each month to the stories and always enjoy them.

I was reading about Kermit Swanson's experiences during WWII in Europe and looking at the pictures. I noticed that the "submachine gun" Kermit was holding looked like a .45 cal. "grease gun". When I was an active marine, we had some of these in Korea (1951-52). It had a stick magazine that held 30 cartridges (approx.) and had an adjustable metal stock. The safety was a flap that lifted up prior to firing the weapon.

Dennis Scoville  
Robinsdale Post 251



M3 Submachine Gun "Grease Gun"



Thompson M1928 Submachine Gun "Tommy Gun"

### Brewery Affiliation

To the Editor:

It is enjoyable to have a beer, pop, or coffee in the company of friends in one of the many post homes located throughout America, similar to that enjoyed during peaceful times of duty in the military. To affiliate our organization with a brewery may appear as a joyful adventure, but I question the judgment of doing so in light of our declining membership.

As Commander of Joe Smith Post, chartered as a Christian Post, and a 5th District Co-Chaplain, I am bringing to the forefront my understanding of the success of The American Legion as well as the freedom in our Nation since their inception. It is explained in Psalm 127:1 "Unless the LORD builds the house, They labor in vain who build it; Unless the LORD guards the city, The watchman keeps awake in vain."

Our Nation was established on the morality and principles of God found in the Bible. The American Legion has stood by these same principles For God and Country since its inception. The weakening progress of sin and alcohol has been present in the lives of all people since the fall in the Garden of Eden during the early days of creation. As

Legion members in a Christian Post, we've been combating the progressive, deteriorating effects of sin and alcohol amongst our friends and fellow Legion members since being chartered in 1944.

We're still combatting these harmful effects amongst the vets today. I wrote a book titled Creation's Glorious Story, which is an evangelical, Biblical view of creation seen through the eyes of a forester and theologian. Four thousand copies have been given free for the taking to the homeless vets in the past three years at Minnesota Standowns. My purpose in giving away these books is to restore a love for God and His creation that we've lost due to the devastating effects of war and alcohol over the years.

I believe that the affiliation of The American Legion with a brewery, or any enterprise with a potential to weaken our stand for God and Country, is detrimental to our membership and our nation. I am making Creation's Glorious Story available free of charge to all interested for the benefit of the future of the American Legion.

Dan Dowidat, Commander  
Joe Smith Post 468, Minneapolis

## Chaplain's Corner

By  
Richard Wog



Spring has begun and the birds are singing their hearts out. I love hearing the beautiful sounds of nature. Another wonderful gift our God gave each of us. Sometimes as I'm driving I see this great bird gliding across the sky and I wonder if it's an eagle. When I get closer I marvel at how beautiful and how massive it is. I see how and why it was picked as the emblem for our country. I started this letter talking about spring. I was told you should never talk about the weather. When you are in sales, never talk about politics and religion. When you think about it, it really takes away one's freedom of speech. Maybe in sales you should not talk about it, but it doesn't mean you can't listen. Maybe that is what is wrong at times, no one takes the time to listen. No matter if it is husband or wife, listening to our children, or it just comes down to the fact, no matter who it is we need to listen more and talk to each other.

I want to share a story with you. I am on the road five days a week. For four weeks I have been driving by this sign. I thought it read, "Sunday is not a day of the week." I thought that isn't right, how can anyone say that? It really bothered me. The fifth week I slowed down to almost a stop. I was wrong, it read, "Someday is not a day of the week." And how true that is. How many times has someone said someday I am going to do something, but someday never comes? I am going to write that letter or make that phone call, or even go and see a loved one; but before it happens they may be gone. We should never have to say someday. Today is the day to do what needs to be done. Today is the day to show our love for our Lord and Savior who gave His life for each of us, so that we can show our love for Him and each other.

Mother's Day is May 11th. I was surprised to learn the history of Mother's Day. Anna Jarvis celebrated it for the first time in 1907; then went on to try to make it an official holiday. Previous attempts at establishing Mother's Day in the United States sought to promote peace by means of honoring mothers who had lost or were at risk of losing their sons to war. On May 10, 1913, the U.S. House of Representatives passed a resolution calling on all federal government officials, including the President to wear a white carnation the following day in observance of Mother's Day. On May 8, 1914 the U.S. government passed a law designating the second Sunday in May as Mother's Day. How important our mothers are and what they do for you throughout your life. They are one of the most important parts of one's life. Americans spend \$2.6 billion on flowers and \$1.53 billion on pampering gifts and another \$68 million on cards. Mothers are worth it. Without Mothers, where would we be? Think about that. You should honor your mothers and show your love for them as she showed her love to you.

We are approaching Memorial Day. A day when all Americans should take the time to honor the soldiers who gave so much. As you pass the cemeteries, the flags are marking the graves of the veterans. For some it is just another holiday. Please take time to think about the men and women who gave everything that they have. We as a country have to be so grateful for what we have. Memorial Day is a day for us as Americans to say thank you to our veterans for what they have given.

## The Minnesota Legionnaire

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Al Zdon, Editor

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# What's Happening

## Legion Day at Twins

The 14th annual American Legion Family Day at the Twins will be held at Target Field on June 7. The game is against the Houston Astros at 1:10 p.m. To purchase tickets, call the Twins at 1-800-33-TWINS, hit "O" to speak to an attendant, and tell them you want the American Legion Day discount. Tickets are \$20 in the Skyline View section.

Department Commander Mike Ash will be throwing out the first pitch and the Legion will also have the U.S. Flag raiser at the game. The first 10,000 fans that day will receive a Gardy Gnome.

## Commander's Testimonial

The testimonial for Department Commander Mike Ash will be held Saturday, May 10, at the Rosetown Memorial Post. The featured speaker for the evening will be Past National Commander Butch Miller. Tickets are \$25 per person and can be obtained by calling Connie Anderson at 651-483-1597 or emailing at jimandconniea@msn.com. Checks should be made out to Christie DeParcq Post 406. Checks can be mailed to Connie at 2921 Payne Ave., Little Canada, MN 55117. There is limited seating.

## Golf Tournament

Chanhasen Post 580 and the Minnesota Military Family Foundation will have a 4-person scramble golf tournament on Monday, May 19. It will be held at Deer Run Golf Course and will feature drawings, social hour, auction, dinner, program and awards. Entry is \$500 per team. For more information contact hospcoordinator@americanlegion580.com or call 952-934-6677.

## Drop-In Clinics

Drop-in Legal Clinics for Veterans will be held at the Minneapolis VA Medical Center on Tuesday, May 13, and at the West Duluth American Legion Post in Duluth on Thursday, May 22.

The clinics, sponsored by the Minnesota Assistance

Council for Veterans and the Fredrikson and Byron law firm, will feature attorneys, MACV staff, County Veteran Service Officers, child support officers who can answer questions and provide legal forms and counseling.

The Minneapolis clinic will be in the Flag Atrium Balcony room at the VA Medical Center. Please go to the information desk.

The American Legion Post 71 in Duluth is located at 5814 Grand Avenue, Duluth.

Both clinics will run from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. For more information call Sara Sommarstrom, 651-224-0292.

## Discover Aviation Days

The annual Discover Aviation Days will be held at the Anoka County Airport in Blaine on May 31 and June 1. On display will be homebuilt, civil, corporate, military, World War II and vintage aircraft. There will also be vendors and exhibitors.

There is no admission fee, but there is a parking donation. There will be a pancake breakfast and a lunch each day and a hangar dance on Saturday night.

For more information, call 763-568-6072.

## Round Table line-up

The Rochester program will feature a program on Gen. Douglas MacArthur with Jon Luebke and Malcom McDaniel. It will be held at the Assembly of God church on Monday, May 12, with the program at 7 p.m. A \$5 donation is expected.

The St. Croix Valley Civil War Round Table will be held on May 19 and will feature "The Battle of Mine Creek" with Michael Hanson. For more information, call Steve Anderson at 715-386-1268.

The Fort Snelling World War II Round Table will feature "Omaha Beach, The Deadliest Fighting on D-Day" with historian John McManus, author of "The Dead and Those About to Die." The program is at 7 p.m. on Thursday, May 8, at the Fort Snelling Visitors Center at the junction of Minnesota Highways 5 and 55. There is a \$5 donation.

He was a member of Alexandria Post 87.

**Trumm, John W.**, 84, Navy veteran of the Korean War, died April 4, 2014. He served as a liaison officer and platoon leader with a Norwegian Mobile Surgical Hospital. He was a member of Alexandria Post 87.

**Smith, Bruce W.**, 61, Navy veteran of the Vietnam War, died March 23, 2014. He was a member of Pequot Lakes Post 49.

**Mikolai, Eugene F.**, 88, Navy veteran of World War II, died April 15, 2014. He served on the carrier USS Saratoga. He was a member of Blue Earth Post 89.

**Phipps, James W.**, 91, Marine Corps veteran of World War II, died April 3, 2014. He served in the Pacific and in China. He was a past commander of Blue Earth Post 89.

**Fobbe, Donald P.**, 92, Army Air Corps veteran of World War II, died March 26, 2014. He was a member of Maple Lake Post 131.

**Oftelie, Clifford Navel**, Marine Corps veteran of World War II, died March 22, 2014. He served in the honor guard for President Roosevelt's funeral. He was a member of Crookson Post 20.

**Hedstrom, Dennis**, 95, Navy veteran of World War II, died March 29, 2014. He served in the Atlantic as an engine mechanic. He was a member of Herman Post 378.

**Carter, Leonard C.**, 62, Navy veteran of the Vietnam War, died March 3, 2014. He was a member of Albert Lea Post 56.

**Simonsen, Bernard**, 92, Army Air Corps veteran of World War II, died April 2, 2014. He was a member of Fairfax Post 205.

**White, Grant**, 79, Navy veteran of the Korean War, died March 31, 2014. He was a member of North Branch Post 85.

**Severin, Willard G.**, 78, Army veteran of the Korean War, died April 16, 2014. He served on the rifle squad and color guard of Chisago City Post 272.

**Priebe, Dennis**, 72, Army veteran of the Vietnam War, died April 8, 2014. He was a member of Waseca Post 228.

**Mielke, Annabel Rae**, 92, Army veteran of World War II, died April 14, 2014. She was an Army nurse, stationed in the United States and in the Philippine and in Tokyo, Japan. She was a Member of Windom Post 206.

**Maier, James**, 76, Army veteran of the Vietnam War, died April 15, 2014. He was a member of Sauk Rapids Post 254.

**Arness, Duane Arthur**, 81, Army veteran of the Korean War, died April 23, 2014. He served in France and was in a military band. He was a longtime member of the Ninth District Band. He was a member of Fisher Post 242.

## Old Glory Run

The Minnesota Disabled American Veterans will be having its annual Old Glory Run on May 17 in Cold Spring. There will be a 5K run/walk and a kids fun 1K run. Each participant gets a t-shirt. The run raises money for veterans causes. For more information, email Bonnie Hanson at info@theoldgloryrun.com or phone 320-290-4909. The opening ceremony will precede the 10 a.m. race.

## Memorial Day

A Memorial Day program will be held at the Minnesota Veterans Home at Minneapolis on Monday, May 26. It is co-sponsored by the 5th District of the Department of Minnesota American Legion. It will be held in the Atrium of Building 19 at 2 p.m.

## Military Ball

The first American Legion Military Ball, sponsored by 3-H Post 1975, will be held on Friday, May 23, from 6 p.m. to midnight. Tickets are \$25 or \$40 per couple. Dress attire is Class A or B or formal wear.

Dancing starts at 8 a.m. It will be held at the Buasavanh Banquet Hall, 7324 Lakeland Ave. N., Brooklyn Park.

For more information, contact Fue Yang at 651-497-6886.

## Post Excellence Award

The national American Legion has a Post Excellence Award that many posts in Minnesota are eligible for. Posts must have exceeded last year's membership to qualify. Other achievements include youth activities, community service and service to troops and veterans. Applications should be made to the district commander who will verify the post's credentials and forward to the Department Adjutant. Accomplishments should include press releases sent to local newspapers.

For more information go to the national website, Legion.org, and click on "About," "National Commander," and "Post Excellence Award."

## Toastmasters at Richfield

A new Toastmaster's group has begun at the Richfield Post 435.

The program allows people to conquer their fears of public speaking. The group meets every Thursday at the post at 6 p.m. The meetings last for an hour and a half. The post is located on Portland Ave. and 66th in Richfield.

Those attending can learn parliamentary procedure, off the cuff speaking, formal speaking and evaluation. There will be professional guest speakers, and those joining can go through one or up to 10 manuals. For more information, call Fritz at 952-920-4137.

## Women's Vets Day Out

There will be a VA Women's Veterans Wellness Fair at the River's Edge Convention Center in St. Cloud on Saturday, May 17 from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Women veterans are underserved by government programs despite the fact that women using VA health care are more likely than men to have a service-connected disability. One in five women veterans have PTSD and one in five have reported sexual trauma while in the military.

Admission is free, women planning to attend the luncheon should RSVP. Please call 320-255-6353. The group "Tina and Lena" will perform.

## Rochester Hangar Dance

The first Rochester Hangar Dance will be held Saturday, June 21, beginning at 6 p.m. at the Rochester Airport. The dance will feature music and swing dancing from the 1940s big band swing music. Performing will be the Generation II Big Band led by Harvey Halpaus.

There will be free swing dancing lessons, World War II aircraft and military vehicles on display, food, a cash bar, a photo booth and more.

Tickets are \$20 in advance or \$23 at the door. Proceeds go toward the future Veterans and Emergency Services Museum in Rochester.

Tickets can be purchased on line at [www.MVESM.org](http://www.MVESM.org).

## Oklahoma charter suspended

The National Executive Committee recently suspended the charter of the Department of Oklahoma, and gave the National Commander the power to relieve all Oklahoma officers of their duties, to freeze all assets, and to terminate the employment of the Department Adjutant.

The NEC further ordered a reorganization of the department with a goal of having the charter re-instated.

An interim adjutant will be hired, and all progress will be reported to the NEC.

# Taps

**Hepokoski, Hubert S.**, 91, Army veteran of World War II, died April 1, 2014. He served in the 7th Infantry Division in Okinawa. He was a member of Chisholm Post 247.

**Blunt, John H.**, 82, Air Force veteran of World War II, died March 3, 2014. He was a member of Belle Plaine Post 144.

**Goebel, Dean Reed**, 89, Army veteran of the Korean War, died April 10, 2014. He served in Alaska with the 196th Regimental Combat Team. He was a member of Rush City Post 93.

**Owen, Carl Allen**, 89, Navy veteran of World War II, died April 10, 2014. He served on the minesweeper USS Skirmish in the South Pacific. He was a member of Pine Island Post 184.

**Squire, James**, 79, Army veteran of the Korean War, died April 4, 2014. He was stationed in Germany. He was a member of Morris Post 29.

**Murphy, Thomas**, 88, Army Air Corps veteran of World War II, died April 12, 2014. He was a member of Chanhasen Post 580.

**Hensel, Dwayne**, 73, Army veteran of the Vietnam War, died April 14, 2014. He was a member of Cold Spring Post 455.

**Alverson, Gillman C.**, 84, Marine Corps member of the Korean War, died March 11, 2014. He was presented with a Purple Heart. He was a member of Sauk Centre Post 67.

**Beilke, John**, 84, Army veteran of the Korean War, died March 17, 2014. He was a member of Sauk Centre Post 67.

**Snyder, Brian**, 65, Marine Corps veteran of the Vietnam War, died March 22, 2014. He was a member of Sauk Centre Post 67.

**Moerke, Donald E.**, 86, Navy veteran of the Korean War, died April 1, 2014. He was a member of Sauk Centre Post 67.

**Berge, Robert S.**, 71, Navy veteran of the Vietnam War, died March 15, 2014. He was a member of Spicer Post 545.

**Jorgenson, A. Ellsworth**, 93, Army Air Corps veteran of World War II, died March 21, 2014. He served in Europe for three years. He was a member of Thief River Falls Post 117.

**Wittry, Ed**, 82, Army veteran of the Korean War, died March 28, 2014. He stayed in the Army Reserve until 1960. He was a member of Lismore Post 636.

**Koelsch, Thayne W. "Charlie,"** 85, Army veteran of World War II, died March 18, 2014. He was a member of Pine Island Post 184.

**Ricks, Jerome Clayton**, 86, Army Air Corps veteran of World War II, died March 11, 2014. He received an honorable discharge to return to the farm after his father's death.



**MINNESOTA SAILOR FEATURED** -- In a new promotional poster created by the U.S. Navy, a Minnesota woman is pictured. Master Chief Aircraft Maintenceman Amy Leach (Perhai) from Hastings, Minnesota, is at the far right. The poster proclaims the fact that 18 percent of those serving in current Navy are women. Women have been serving in the Navy since 1908. The women, with different specialties, are shown on the flight deck of the USS Carl Vinson (CVN-70) with San Diego in the background.

## Sons of The American Legion

By  
John W. Affolter



Congratulations Detachment of Minn-E-Soda. You and Shawn Davis have shot for the goal/moon and exceeded every target this year. Don't let down. We have just two more targets left.

We currently have 9,875 members as of April 17 at 91.809% and we are in 15th place nationally, 2nd behind Iowa in the 2nd place Central Region (100% is the April 9 goal -- only 881 more). We hope to exceed 11,000 members for 2014, just 1,125 more (or 1,419 for the 105% July 23 goal). We are 6th nationally in retention at 84.32% but we still need to reach out to our 1,787 un-renewed last year's members. The latest I have from the State has all but 3 Districts over the 90% goal (2nd 96.94) (5th 92.77) (6th 92.23) (9th 91.12) (7th 91.08) (1st 90.95) (3rd 90.08) (10th 89.56) (8th 89.11) (4th 80.92). I encourage all Legionnaires and others eligible to be a "son" to join us (dual is cool). By the way I have a challenge with the Detachment of California SAL Commander Chris Affolter (cousin?) and they are now less than 1% behind us.

There is a retention pin for any American Legion family member that signed up 5 new SAL members (not renewals) for 2014 find fillable form on our web site (send to the Central Region Chairman). Get it for those who deserve it.

On Saturday, April 12, I gave greetings and attended most of the Junior Auxiliary Annual Conference at Hopkins Unit 320. Honorary Junior President Kaitlin Fernlund conducted a well run meeting with an impressive program book. She graduated in a ceremony with 2 others to the senior Auxiliary (her 18th birthday). Congratulations to new Honorary Junior President Jules Efta and the rest of her officers. I am looking forward to her being at events the rest of this year. Then I zipped over to the Redwood Falls Post 38 for the Commander/Presidents testimonial dinner Saturday night. I'm glad to travel where needed to represent the Sons of the American Legion, contact me - more visits in the coming months.

Please make plans on attending our Campout and Convention at Legionville on June 27-29 hosted by the 4th & 5th Districts. National Commander Joe Gladden is scheduled to attend. Watch your squadron mailings and web site for details and registrations. Please note for your plans that future Spring Conferences are set for 2015 - Anoka, and 2016 in Morris in mid March and conventions the end of June.

Legionville is my Commanders Project. Use the Brick Paver program to contribute if you can, otherwise any contribution will be accepted.

Please pass this on to those who may not receive the Legionnaire. Visit our website <http://mnsal.org> hosted by our webmaster Allen Amundson often for updated info on all SAL activities. We can have fun & get the job done

## Report from U of M shows Legion's contributions to work on pediatrics

*The following report was received from the University of Minnesota regarding the The Minnesota American Legion's endowment to the university.*

The American Legion has a remarkable history of support for health-related research, education, and care at the University of Minnesota. This partnership began in 1948 when the Legion gave \$500,000 to establish a chair at the Medical School to accelerate research on rheumatic fever and heart disease in children. Since then, the Legion has contributed more than \$4 million to the University's work in pediatrics. One of the biggest ways in which this legacy continues is through the work of children's health physician-scientists who are supported by two chair funds.

Because of The American Legion, countless kids in Minnesota and beyond are leading longer, healthier lives. This celebrated legacy of support is an inspiration to all of us at the University and to the many families who have received the precious gift of health because of your significant investment. Thank you for your thoughtfulness, generosity, and determination to make a difference!

### Chair in Children's Health

In 2010, the Minnesota American Legion and Auxiliary Heart Research Foundation established this chair to build on the legion's tradition of advancing research at the University of Minnesota that benefits the children of Minnesota, the nation, and the world. The purpose of the chair is to attract and retain outstanding faculty members in pediatrics. In 2010, Joseph Neglia, M.D., M.P.H., head of the Department of Pediatrics and physician-in-chief at University of Minnesota Amplatz Children's Hospital, was named the inaugural chair holder. A pediatric oncologist, Dr. Neglia focuses on long-term health outcomes for children with cancer. His work has emphasized several areas critical to the lives of children and young adults, including the occurrence in cancer survivors of new cancers later in life, cognitive outcomes for leukemia survivors, and the impact of cancer on the long-term quality-of-life for survivors.

Over the past year, Dr. Joseph Neglia and his colleagues in the Department of Pediatrics have made significant progress in research supported by the Minnesota American Legion and Auxiliary Chair in Children's Health. Highlights follow.

### Heart Research Foundation Chair

Established in 1948, this chair-which pays tribute to veterans of World Wars I and II-has helped to advance the research of six pediatrics faculty members, including Drs. Lewis Thomas, Robert Good, Paul Quie, Margaret Hostetter, and Scott Giebink. Current chair holder, Mark Schleiss, M.D., has used support from the chair to develop a vaccine for the prevention of congenital cytomegalovirus,

## Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

By  
Tom Newman



Did you ever have a coach? If so, is the coach you're thinking of a traditional athletic coach, or possibly someone entirely different? This person could include a teacher, parent, spouse, or maybe even an employment supervisor? Or even better, how about that motivated drill instructor waiting to greet you at the bottom of the ropes course you took back in basic training?

Maybe you still remember those hollowed words of inspiration being bellowed toward you. "Hey private, you knuckled" or "I highly suggest you clear my obstacle private." Did you make it? If I could take a wild guess, despite the mud in your teeth and eyes as well as a few frayed nerves, you were successfully coached towards negotiating that obstacle. Ultimately the one thing consistent among all coaches, despite whom it is they may be, is their ability and willingness to help you perform better than you could have possibly done yourself.

Welcome to the American Legion Claims Coach. It's a terrific resource for most any Veteran wishing to get some additional help pursuing earned benefits administered by the Federal Department of Veterans Affairs. This is most definitely an area that many of our Veterans could use a good coach.

The American Legion Claims Coach provides step-by-step guidance to help you and your service officer through the process of filing for VA benefits. A nationwide directory of accredited American Legion service officers, a built-in organizer for appointments, documents, and deadlines and a wealth of other information resources are contained within the app. A personal, secure file called "My Checklist" keeps everything in order, from your initial meeting through VA's decision.

The American Legion Claims Coach is an organizational tool to help clarify the process of VA benefits application. The app does not replace personal contact with your local County Veteran Service Officers, but it can help veterans understand the claims process, gather the right documentation for meetings and map out the steps in the journey.

The app does not automatically set appointments for the user, nor does it directly file forms with VA. The Claims Coach is an educational and organizational tool that streamlines the filing process and helps veterans make the most of time with their service officers. The Claims Coach is not computer software or a Web page. It is designed for use on mobile devices such as smartphones or electronic tablets. Some features of the app connect to websites, but the Claims Coach, once downloaded onto your phone or tablet, is your own personal, safe and secure organizer.

The Claims Coach is available, free of charge, from the Apple iTunes store or Google Play. Using your iPad, tablet, or smartphone device, navigate to the store to download your app by tapping the appropriate icon on your home screen. Once you have launched the store, search for "The American Legion" and the Claims Coach will be one of the apps offered. Tap the install button next to the icon for even quicker access to the app. Another option is to visit the American Legion national website using the browser on your device. [www.legion.org/mobileapps](http://www.legion.org/mobileapps). This address will take you to a menu of American Legion mobile apps. Click on the Claims Coach icon, and then click on the link to take you to the appropriate store to download your app.

In order to improve the app's functionality, the Legion is also seeking input from those veterans using the app. By downloading the app and then participating in a short online questionnaire, you can help our organization improve the Claims Coach and make it an even better tool.

[tnewman@mnlegion.org](mailto:tnewman@mnlegion.org)

an infectious disease that is the most common congenital infection and the most common cause of birth defects and childhood disabilities in the United States.

Dr. Mark Schleiss continues to make strides in his work as holder of the Minnesota American Legion and Auxiliary Heart Research Foundation Chair. The research of his team continues to emphasize developing a vaccine for cytomegalovirus (CMV) that can be administered to babies in utero. Over the past year, support from the American Legion chair has enabled them to make substantial progress on this front. They created an animal model of CMV transmission that has helped them to better understand the intricacies of the disease and identify the most promising vaccine for its prevention, resulting in the publication of 19 papers since January 2013. Dr. Schleiss and his team have found that the glycoprotein B and pp65 vaccines, which had been proposed for clinical trials, demonstrate interference in an animal model and may not be optimal for the clinic. Going forward, they plan to examine other viral proteins for improved protection and reduced interference. outstanding support.

# Spring Roundup Rally in Montevideo

Sliding membership numbers and some wind and rain couldn't dampen the spirits at the Spring Roundup Rally at Montevideo Post 59 in April.

The rally featured the presence of many American Legion Riders, and the Riders at Montevideo prepared the meal.

"The best working Legion Family is the state of Minnesota, no doubt about it," said Steve Sullivan of the Riders.

Sullivan noted that the Minnesota Riders this past year brought in \$51,000 for The American Legion Legacy Scholarship Fund.

"We weren't first, but we made some other states dig a little deeper."

Sullivan said the Riders are planning two state Legacy runs this year, one in the North the first week of August and one in southern Minnesota on the second week in August.

In membership reports, the figures showed that the state has hit a wall in bring-

ing in memberships.

The Auxiliary has slipped to 15th place in the nation with a total of 91.58 percent. The Ninth District leads the way at 92.6 percent.

The Legion fell all the way to 26th after being in the top ten for most of the year. The Legion total after

the rally was 94.75 percent with the Ninth District in first place at 95.09 percent.

The Sons of the American Legion are at 92.97 percent for 15th place nationally. The SAL did break the 10,000 mark again this year with a total at the rally of 10,120.



The Spring Roundup Rally has also become the American Legion Riders rally. One of many bikes at the rally is parked in front of the Montevideo Post.



Everett Bay of the Montevideo Riders told of the local community work done by the Riders.



Scuffy Paulson introduced his sons, Colt and Cody. Department Commander Mike Ash was in front.



Steve Sullivan talked about plans for the Minnesota Legacy Run this coming year.



Membership Chairman Barbara Klehr holds the box as Membership Director Tom Fernlund draws for a prize.



Among the group of motorcycles parked outside the Montevideo Legion Club was this tribute to the U.S. Army.



Commander Mike Ash passes out checks and certificates to district commanders whose district achieved the latest goal.



National Auxiliary Vice President-elect Lori Skallerud was introduced.



Public Relations Chairman Teresa Ash looks for a picture for Facebook.

## Membership Chart As of April 29, 2014

District	2014 Goal	Total 2013	Total 2014	Percent of Goal	Same Date '13
1	10,370	10,312	9,745	93.97	10,260
2	8,528	8,443	7,910	92.75	8,396
3	12,927	12,862	12,253	94.79	12,798
4	2,686	2,663	2,483	92.44	2,606
5	3,112	3,089	2,903	93.28	3,059
6	13,192	13,121	12,498	94.74	13,092
7	7,545	7,467	7,081	93.84	7,418
8	5,049	5,008	4,653	92.16	4,948
9	7,659	7,594	7,286	95.13	7,518
10	11,741	11,688	11,008	93.76	11,628
At-large	1,733	1,748	2,296	132.49	1,742
<b>Totals</b>	<b>84,542</b>	<b>83,995</b>	<b>80,116</b>	<b>94.76</b>	<b>83,465</b>

# MINNESOTA MAN IS WITNESS TO BUCHENWALD

By Al Zdon

Merrill Burgstahler has spoken to over 15,000 people in recent years about an experience he had in World War II.

Burgstahler was part of the invasion of France, the Battle of the Bulge and the conquest of Germany. He was nearly blown up by a German V-1 rocket. He was part of a unit that shot down 111 German aircraft. He received a Bronze Star for meritorious service.

But none of those achievements cause Burgstahler at age 91 to continue to bring his slide show and words to churches, schools and community centers.

His topic is Buchenwald, the German concentration camp where 56,000 prisoners died during the war. The Sixth Armored Division, to which Burgstahler's anti-aircraft unit was attached, liberated the death camp in April 1945.

Burgstahler was there.

"The pictures of Buchenwald are horrifying enough. But I could smell it. I'll never forget it."

□□□□□□

Merrill Curtis Burgstahler was born in Hector, Minnesota, in 1923, the son of a former farmer and the eldest of five children.

"My dad farmed until he was 27 when he had heat stroke. He got a job as a Standard Oil agent in Hector. He was a free and independent spirit and he suffered under the Standard Oil Company until 1926."

That year, the elder Burgstahler built a country store in Corvuso, and operated it for several years. But the store went broke in 1931 as the Great Depression settled into America. "On October 31, Halloween night, my father loaded my mother and all five kids into a Model T Ford and we moved to Glencoe. My dad sold insurance there."

The house was owned by Burgstahler's mother's family, and they paid \$20 a month to live there. They had a garden of nearly one acre, six apple trees and a couple of dozen chickens.

"We were fairly self-sufficient. Both parents came from farms and they were used to working. They kept the family going."

Burgstahler went to Glencoe School from the fourth grade through graduating from high school. As the oldest child, he felt a need to contribute to the family finances.

"I mowed a lot of lawns for fifty cents each. But, of course, you didn't just mow the lawn but you pulled the weeds, hauled the ashes, and brought the coal in. I also sold magazines every week. The *Saturday Evening Post* was five cents and the *Ladies' Home Journal* was 10 cents. I can't remember what my cut was."

Burgstahler took a Minneapolis Star-Journal paper route when he was sophomore in high school, and by the time he was a junior, he was the Junior Agency Manager, with 17 carriers working for him. He bought his own car to get around town.

Burgstahler reorganized the routes in Glencoe so they made sense for the carriers. "I'm kind of an organizer, I guess, if I'm not happy with the status quo."

After he graduated from high school in 1940, there was no money to go to college so Burgstahler asked the high school principal if he could come back and take high school courses he hadn't taken before. The school agreed.

In the winter of 1940-41, he got into an auto mechanics course in town taught by an expert Ford mechanic. The young lads not only learned how to change brakes and over-

haul an engine, but other useful skills like double clutching large trucks and backing up a semi.

"My dad always had a saying: 'You can't get too much education.'"

By summer, school was done and he decided to quit the newspaper job. "I went to work for my uncle as a harvest hand. I ran a bundle team."

A bundle team is a couple of horses and a wagon that gathers the grain bundles from the field and brings them to the bundle machine. "I made \$3 a day plus board and room. I never worked so hard in my life. I figured there had to be something better."

Burgstahler's next stop was a National Youth Administration program in Shakopee that paid \$7.20 a month plus board and room. The young men were taught machine shop skills. "I loved that kind of work because it was so precise and challenging."

The Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor in December, 1941, while Burgstahler was still at school. When the school ended, he journeyed to Lake Street in Minneapolis and applied for a job at Minneapolis Moline, a large farm tractor maker.

"I told them I was a tool grinder and that's where my training was. The guy interviewing me took my application and threw it into his desk on a two-inch stack of other applications. He said, 'Well, we'll call you.'"

Burgstahler was walking out the door, when the personnel man called him back. "Moline had a part of the plant that was making the Bofors anti-aircraft gun. It was top secret, and you had to have a badge just to get into that area. They called in the foreman for that division."

*Merrill Burgstahler grew up in Glencoe and was drafted in 1943. He joined the 777th Anti-Aircraft Battalion which was assigned to the 6th Armored Division, one of Patton's top divisions. In 1945, as the tanks rolled across Germany, the 6th Armored liberated the concentration camp at Buchenwald. Burgstahler will never forget what he saw there, and he gives frequent talks on his experiences.*



The foreman asked Burgstahler if he knew how to run a lathe. Again Burgstahler had to tell him that he wanted to be a tool grinder. "Finally the foreman said, 'Can you start Tuesday?'"

Burgstahler stayed at Moline until he was drafted at age 20. "At the end I was making 93 cents an hour. I would get time and a half for the first eight hours of overtime and double time for the next eight hours. I thought I was on easy street."

He reported to Fort Snelling for induction in March, 1943, and was sent to Fort Sheridan, Illinois, to take basic



**MERRILL BURGSTAHLER**  
At home in Glen Lake, Minnesota



**MERRILL BURGSTAHLER**  
As part of the 6th Armored Division in World War II