

## Browning Automatic Rifle

**Produced:** 1917-1950s  
**Weight:** 19 pounds  
**Length:** 48 inches  
**Cartridge:** .30-06 Springfield  
**Action:** Gas operated  
**Rate of Fire:** 500 rounds per minute  
**Effective Range:** 100 to 1,500 yards  
**Feed System:** 20-round detachable box magazine



medical bag for that kind of wound, but he took a piece of cellophane off his gas mask and sealed the wound. Then I could breathe a little better.”

The corpsman asked Lee if he could walk to the rear by himself. “I had to stop every 15 or 20 feet to catch my breath.

“I was about halfway there when I saw what I thought was a mound of dirt in the ditch in front of me. I wanted to get out of the water, so I put my foot down on it to rest. It turned out that it wasn’t dirt, it was a water buffalo that had probably been killed during the shelling before the invasion.

“When I put my foot down it erupted and everything just flew up in my face. All the maggots and guts and crap came out all over me. That’s where I really lost it. I threw up all over the place. I forgot all about my problem breathing.”

Lee finally got to the aid station. “They asked me, ‘Where the hell have you been?’ I must have been quite a sight.” The doctor at the aid station left the cellophane in place, and complimented the corpsman on a heads-up solution to the wound.

From the aid station, he was taken out to a hospital ship. “I must have stood in the shower for a half an hour. They took my clothes and washed them.”

Lee was getting ready to settle in for some recuperation, maybe even a trip back to the United States, when a Marine officer came through the next morning and asked if there were ambulatory men who would go back to the beach. “Basically he said that anybody who could walk should go back.

“That’s how short of men they were. So I went back to the beach and made my way to where my platoon was. They hadn’t moved an inch since I had left. In fact, my BAR was still leaning against a tree where I had left it.”

Lee wasn’t in tip-top shape. “I had trouble breathing, but I could manage it. And I’m left-handed, and so I fired the BAR with my left arm, and it was really sore.”

The Marines finally got through the jungle and up on top of a ridge after three or four days.

“That’s where we had our first banzai attack. It was on our fifth night on Guam. We had finally taken the high ground, and the Japanese didn’t like it. My buddy and I were in a shell hole, and we had dug it out a little bigger. It was really a good fox hole.”

Lee and the others could hear the Japanese below. “They were yelling and making a lot of noise. They didn’t care if we could hear them. I suppose they were getting ‘sakied’ up to make the charge. We called in the artillery on their position, and that quieted them down for a while.”

At 11 p.m., the Japanese attacked. “They made no pretense of being quiet. They just came right at us.”

The night was lit up by star shells from both sides. “Our shells were yellow and theirs were kind of orange. If you ever want to know what hell looked like, that was it. All of a sudden there were hundreds of Japanese right in front and they all wanted to kill us. We started firing, and we were mowing them down pretty good.”

The enemy kept coming, though, and a grenade landed in the shell hole instantly killing Lee’s companion. “It knocked me out cold, and I fell into the bottom of the hole, and my buddy fell on top of me.

“I don’t know how long I was out, but when I woke up there were two Japanese sitting on the edge of the hole talking like they were in downtown Tokyo. I still had my BAR in my hands, but I couldn’t remember if I had any shells left in that clip. I knew all I had to do was move it about a foot and I could shoot them.”

Lee pondered his situation for a while. “I finally decided that at some point they would make sure we were dead. So I moved my BAR and shot them. I had five or six rounds left, and I killed them both. That was the first attack.”

Knowing the enemy would probably come again, Lee called back to the command post for more ammunition, and about 15 or 20 more clips were brought up.

“But now I had two BARs, mine and my buddy’s. I was



A tank with a flame thrower attacks a Japanese position on Iwo Jima while Marines dig in.



Lee receives his Purple Heart earned during action on Guam. He still carries the shrapnel in his chest.



Marines show off a captured Japanese flag on Iwo Jima.



Marines slog through the mud on Bougainville. Lee got a severe fungus on his feet and lost all his toenails.

pretty much ready if they came back, but my hearing was practically nil. Besides there was no place to go. Nobody retreated that night. We knew we had to hold that line or lose the beachhead."

It wasn't long before the second attack came. "This one was even more fierce. I'd use one BAR until it was empty and then grabbed the other one. When I got a chance, I'd reload both of them. I grabbed one by the barrel at one point and burned my hand. Pretty soon there were piles of bodies about 10 or 15 yards in front of me. You couldn't shoot through them, you had to fire around them.

"We were so stressed up, so hyper. We were running on pure adrenaline. It's a good thing we were young."

Again, the Marines withstood the attack.

Lee said he never thought of his shrapnel wound during the fighting. "Over the days, I would re-bandage it now and then. After a while I could breathe pretty well. I kept that cellophane over the wound for the whole campaign. They never took out that shrapnel. Whenever I go through an airport, it sets off all the bells and whistles."

The Japanese resistance was much weaker after that. "I think they shot their wad on those attacks. There were still a lot of Japanese on the island, and they would try to infiltrate us at night."

Out on a patrol one day in the 100 degree heat, the officer called for a halt. "I was dozing on one side of a tree, and the captain was half dozing on the other side. All of a sudden there was a shell burst in the tree right above us. He made a grunt, and then he fell over right on top of me. He was dead."

The odd thing, Lee said, was that there was no blood. "We took his blouse off, and we found a very small hole on his shoulder. A small piece of shrapnel had come straight down and gone right into his heart. There wasn't a drop of blood."

By mid-August 1944, Guam was declared secure although thousands of enemy soldiers held out in the jungles and cliffs. One Japanese soldier was found living in a cave 27 years later.

The Marines took their rest right on Guam, and again got an infusion of replacements. "I never had any problem with replacements. They seemed to be pretty well trained. And they were glad to get the advice of the veterans."

The men had weekends off, and they could swim in the beautiful bays on the island. "The food was okay. By this time you pretty much ate whatever they gave you. But one time they brought in this greasy mutton from New Zealand. I said, 'No thanks,' and I just had some more Spam.

"We were unsure where we would go next. We thought it might be Okinawa, but it turned out it was Iwo Jima. We'd never heard of it."

The Third Marine Division was supposed to be in reserve, but when the Marines landed unopposed on January 20 and quickly moved inland, units of the division were called upon. The Japanese had decided to wait until the Americans and their equipment were on the shore before responding. The enemy had been digging in for nearly a year.

"The beach was so congested that our Higgins Boat just kept circling. We finally ran out of fuel, and we just sat there rolling with the surf. Of course, these were flat bottomed boats, and we all got seasick. That was a mess with guys trying to heave over the side."

The boat was finally refueled and headed back to the ship. "I was so sick that I didn't even go down below. I just went up to the forecandle and crashed on the deck."

At six in the morning on the 21st, the men climbed down the cargo nets again and went ashore in the landing craft. "Suribachi was on our left, and the beach was still taking some shelling. We just dug in and stayed, waiting for word.

"By this time of the war, I'd seen a lot of dead people, but the thing that really hit me right off the bat on that beach were all the body parts. There would be an arm lying there and a torso over there. It seemed like a real butcher shop."

The next morning, the Marines advanced toward a Japanese airstrip. "The colonel took a sniper shot in his jaw. We continued to move up and relieved the 4th Marine Division. They were in bad shape."

On the 23rd, the unit was stopped cold. "There were seven pill boxes and bunkers in front of us and we just couldn't get through. That's when Woody Williams took over. He was just a short guy, but he was strong, built like a truck. He was a hillbilly from West Virginia."

With Lee and three other riflemen providing covering fire, Williams spent several hours going from one concrete position to another, using his flame thrower and demolition charges to take them out. Though frequently exposed, he was never hit. Time and again, he had to bring his 70-pound flame thrower back to be refilled.

"He'd stand right on top of the bunkers in front of God and everybody. Everyone wondered what the hell he was doing. It was just amazing. He didn't think of anything except doing his job. It was our job. He didn't even get a scratch that day, but then he got wounded later."

After the war, at Marine reunions, Lee and Williams would try to reconstruct the action that day. "But between the two of us, we can't put it together."

The next day, Lee's unit advanced to the edge of a second airstrip. "The tanks couldn't help us. They were just

stuck in the sand. I was a platoon sergeant by this time, and the lieutenant took me aside and said that we were going to do our own banzai attack the next morning across that airstrip."

Lee decided not to tell his men so they could get some sleep. Lee didn't get any. "That was a bad night. It was the longest night of my life. We had come so damn close to the end of the war, but I figured this was it. It was my time to die. I spent the night praying, begging, bargaining."

At 0400, he got his men ready for the attack at 0600. "The sun was just coming up. I knew this had to be my last day because the morning was just so beautiful."

The Marines attacked. "It was just mass heroism. I think we made it across that strip in about one and half minutes. We were flying. I jumped in a hole and I was just lying there out of breath. The radio man jumped in on top of me, and I thought he'd kill me with that radio.

"I looked back and there were guys lying there and crawling on the airstrip. And this is what got me. They could have crawled back to our old positions, but they were all crawling toward us.

"One of my guys said, 'I think that's Harrington back there crawling.' So we had to go get him. I put down my BAR. I even took my helmet off so I could go faster. We got to him and grabbed him under the arms and started dragging him. He was screaming all the while. He had been hit by a machine gun in both legs.

"When we got him to the hole, I took off my belt and made a tourniquet for one leg, and I took off his belt and made a tourniquet for the other leg. After a while the corpsman came. Later I heard he lost a leg."

The Japanese tried to push the Americans back, but the Marines stood their hard-earned ground.

Lee had survived the day he was sure would be his last, but it was the next day that ended his combat career.

"We wanted to take this little hill in front of us, but we had to cover some open ground. There were five us running abreast when a Japanese rocket blew up right in front of us.

"It blew up in the ash or sand, and that probably saved my life. The three guys in the middle were killed and the ones on either side survived. It threw me about 30 feet into the air and knocked me out. I was bleeding from my ears and my nose and my mouth. It punctured both my eardrums. Somebody pulled me into a hole and saved my life."

Four men grabbed a stretcher and tried to haul Lee back to an aid station. "But a bomb went off, and they dropped the stretcher and dove into a hole leaving me out there. There I was in front of God and everybody."

Eventually, Lee did make it to an aid station and then was evacuated back to Saipan. "I was still in shell shock. The doctor told it looked like I had freckles because of all the little pieces of shrapnel in my face and arm."

Lee was sent back to Hawaii, but the hospitals were full at Pearl Harbor so the ship took him all the way to San Francisco.

"We went under the Golden Gate bridge on March 25, 1945. I was home alive in 45."

He was hospitalized in Oregon, and later in Chicago. Lee was discharged in September of 1945, just after the end of the war. Until a few years ago, he was still pulling little slivers of metal out of his body.

He went back to college for three years, but he said he was much too restless to make it work. "In World War I, they called it shell shock, and in World War II they called it battle fatigue. Now they call it PTSD. I suppose I had that. There was too much drinking I know."

When a chance came to take a test for the Post Office, he gave it a try and finished third out of 85 applicants. He worked for the Post Office for 34 years. He finished his degree at Winona State and spent the next 15 years teaching high school economics and history, and then became a substitute teacher. Teaching was the career he always wanted.

He and his wife, Marian, had six children, but lost two of them in a tragic drowning accident when they were young. Marian died this past year.

He has been to many reunions, and recently came back from the 70th anniversary reunion at Guam and Iwo Jima where he spent time with his family, with other veterans and with Woody Williams. "We tried to figure out where everything was, but it was covered with brush five or six feet high. It was just bare sand when we were there during the war."

Recently he received his pin as a 70-year member of The American Legion. He likes going down to the post home. "It's a good bunch of guys. It's a good bunch of comrades."

*(Parts of this story came from an interview that Lee did with the Nimitz Education and Research Center during a reunion in Fredericksburg, Texas, in 2013, and from an interview he did with Richard Adank of Winona this past year.)*



At a military history event in Indianapolis recently, Woody Williams asked Lefty Lee to come up and place his Medal of Honor around his neck. Williams paid tribute to Lee who supported Williams' heroic actions with his BAR.



Williams just after receiving his Medal of Honor.



Lefty Lee, on the right side of the flag, and Woody Williams and their families recently attended a 70th anniversary reunion on Guam and Iwo Jima.



## Minnesota American Legion Military Hall of Fame

# THOMAS P. GERE

## CHATFIELD, MINNESOTA

By Al Zdon

Thomas Parke Gere was one of the rare Minnesota soldiers who distinguished himself both in the Indian Wars and the Civil War.

Gere earned a Medal of Honor at the Battle of Nashville in December 1864 for capturing a Rebel flag.

But two and one-half years before that act of gallantry, he was a young officer with the mumps who found himself in charge of a fort on edge of the frontier when the largest American Indian uprising to that point in U.S. history took place.

Gere was born in Wellsburg, Chemung County, in western New York on Sept. 10, 1842. He had moved to Winona, Minnesota, with his family in 1852 and to Chatfield in Fillmore County in 1854 when he was 12. In 1862, he enlisted in Company B of the Fifth Minnesota Infantry Regiment. He was 19 years old, and he was following in the footsteps of his older brother, William, who was already an officer in the regiment.

Gere had to get a letter of permission signed by his father and witnessed by his brother to sign up. The idea was that William, known as "Beecher" to Thomas, an attorney in civilian life, would look after his little brother.

"Hurrah, today I have signed the muster roll," he wrote in his journal on Jan. 17, 1862.

The Chatfield company was sent to Fort Snelling where, Gere reported, "All the boys are contented and full of fun." There was plenty of training, but there was also time for snowball fights, clandestine trips to Mendota for whiskey, razzing the new recruits, and a visit to Minnehaha Falls to see that wonder of nature.

His rise through the ranks was meteoric in the wartime army. He enlisted as a private, but soon became the acting orderly sergeant. On March 27, when one of the officers resigned, Gere was elected by his comrades to replace him and become a second lieutenant – the same day his brother was promoted to major. He sometimes wrote of himself in the third person, and on that day he wrote, "Such good fortune is more than he deserves; may he bear his honors as becomes a soldier."

In late March, the soldiers got some awful news. Instead of heading off to the glory and honor of the Civil War, Company B was assigned to relieve two companies of men

of the 4th Minnesota Regiment who were garrisoned at Fort Ridgely.

The fort had been built between 1853-55 to provide a federal presence near the two large Dakota reservations along the Minnesota River. Over the years it had seen such notable officers as Napoleon Dana, Lewis Armistead, William Tecumseh Sherman and John C. Pemberton.

The fort itself was a disappointment to Gere and his comrades when they arrived on March 29. Originally planned to include block houses and palisades like a real fort, in the end it was simply a cluster of buildings, reflecting more of an administrative than a fighting role with the peaceful Dakota. It was, Gere wrote in his journal, "away in the wilderness."

The men spent their time doing guard duty, drills, inspections and more training. Gere commented on the plains climate: "The average number of windy days in a week being eight and one half." The men chafed at their duty and ached to be in the real war. "We long to be in one of the glorious fights that impend."

In June, mom and dad arrived from Chatfield to visit Gere. Not long after that, Gere's men honored him with a present of a sword and sash, befitting an officer. "Fortune seems to smile continually on me; is she reserving her frowns for the future?"

On June 28, 1862, the regiment's Company C, which was garrisoned at Fort Ripley, about 120 miles to the northeast as the crow flies, arrived at Ridgely to help Company B with distributing the \$70,000 treaty annuity that was expected to arrive any day. On the 30th, a portion of Company B under Gere's command (Lt. Marsh stayed at the fort) and Company C left for the Upper Sioux Agency some 50 miles away. "We left the fort as gay as a picnic party" and arrived at the agency on July 2.

Gere found the Indians to be quite friendly. They only asked the soldiers to keep the traders at bay when the annuity payments were made.

By July 19, with no annuity payment in sight, the friendly atmosphere seemed to change. The soldiers at the agency sent for another howitzer "fearing there is going to be some trouble." On the 22nd, the second cannon arrived at the upper agency.

On August 24th, Gere saw a sight few American soldiers had ever seen. A Dakota war party headed out to seek some

Ojibways that had been raiding to the north. The party was 1,000 strong with over 400 mounted, "like so many demons. They poured over the hills armed to the teeth, some stripped to the skin. I shall never forget this day."

On the 26th, the soldiers helped count the Indians, family by family, in preparation for giving out the payment, which still had not arrived. It took over 12 hours to do the census. On the 28th, Lt. Sheehan took 14 men on a mission to capture Chief Ink-Pa-Du-Ta "dead or alive" for inciting unrest among the Dakota bands. Sheehan came back without finding the chief on Aug. 3.

Things started to come to a head on Aug. 4 when 600 to 800 Dakota surrounded the stone warehouse saying they were gathering peaceably. Suddenly one of the warriors drove a hatchet into the warehouse door. "I saw at once we had been deceived and I ordered the boys of Company B to fall into line."

As the soldiers got into formation, the Indians broke down the door and started looting the warehouse. The Dakota were "cocking and priming their guns."

A sergeant led a group of 16 men to the warehouse, and "put every Indian out. 'Twas a gallant and dangerous act."

The situation was tense, with conferring going on between the chiefs, the agent, and the military. Lt. Sheehan and the Indian agent in particular were at odds about what to do, and Sheehan finally sent Gere back to Fort Ridgely to get Lt. Marsh to weigh in on the issue.

Gere left in the late afternoon and arrived back at the fort at 3 a.m. By 5 a.m., he and Marsh were headed back to the Upper Agency. The round trip, Gere wrote, had covered 104 miles in 21 hours – riding mules.

Marsh was able to calm the situation and convince the agent to give out some of the goods, also promised to the Dakota by the treaty, on Aug. 6. The Dakota bands went home. By the 12th of August, the soldiers were back at Ridgely, still waiting for the \$70,000 in gold which was now long overdue.

Gere said it looked like peace would triumph, and on the 17th, Company C set out to return to Ripley. That same day, a group of 50 Army recruits, called the "Renville Rangers," passed through the fort heading for Fort Snelling.

On Monday, Aug. 18, a clear and warm day, "How rudely we were awakened from our dream."

At 10:20 a.m. on the 18th, an “almost breathless messenger” arrived with the first news of the uprising at the Lower Agency. Marsh acted quickly and set off a half hour later with 47 men for the agency’s small cluster of buildings, about 12 miles away. He also sent word to the Ripley soldiers to return immediately.

As Marsh headed out, he was met by “scores of affrightened citizens.”

That left Gere in charge of the fort with 24 men – no walls, no moat, and dozens of terrified civilians pouring into the post every hour. He faced, in his own words, “the most widespread and horrid Indian massacre that ever desolated the American frontier.”

In an account he wrote later in life, Gere again referred to himself in the third person: “The lieutenant in whose command the fort had been left and under whose charge the distressed and terror-stricken aggregate of men, women and children, was but 19 years of age, one of the patriotic boy volunteers for the army of the Union.”

At noon that day, ironically, the gold finally arrived from Fort Snelling, but it was “wisely concluded to go no further.”

By evening, there were 200 panicky settlers at the fort, and not one word from Marsh. And while all this was going on, Gere himself was seriously ill with the mumps.

Finally, two exhausted men from Marsh’s command staggered into the fort and told Gere that Marsh was dead, as was most of his command. They had been ambushed at a ferry crossing over the Minnesota River, and, while trying to lead his men on an escape, Marsh had drowned in the river.

“It was not deemed possible that it had assumed proportions beyond control.” Gere said, “It rendered the situation profoundly trying.”

It was, Gere later wrote, “a tale whose import in view of the possible consequences to the frightened and well nigh unprotected mass of humanity then there, sufficient to appall the stoutest heart.”

The young officer did what he could, though. He posted the men in picket positions all around the fort, with orders to run back to the buildings if shots were fired.

Not long after, a civilian on guard duty thought he saw something and yelled, “Indians!”

“The scene that ensued defied description. There were men in terror breaking through the window to get inside.” Gere determined it was a false alarm, and again sent out the pickets – but this time only the trained soldiers. “Each moment’s flight was watched by the little garrison with desperate resolve.”

Gere had all the women and children brought into the stone barracks at the center of the fort. As the night wore on, more and more stragglers came in.

Gere also sent word to Governor Alexander Ramsey by way of a memorable 170 mile horse ride by Private William Sturgis. “A mounted courier was dispatched in hot haste.” Along the way, Sturgis encountered the Renville Rangers and had them turn around.

On Tuesday, Gere and others at the fort could see the Dakota warriors to the west in the plains, led by their chief Little Crow, gathering in clear view to discuss strategy. Had they attacked at that moment, the odds would not have been good for the little garrison. However, they chose to attack New Ulm and other places that day, and leave the fort for later.

By early afternoon, Company C returned to the fort after a forced march of some 50 miles. “It was the first to impart hope to its distressed inmates.” They had marched all night. At about 6 p.m., the Renville recruits arrived.

Gere, who had done well in keeping order, keeping the civilians under control, and preparing a defense, was now relieved of command by Lt. Sheehan, his superior in rank. The force at the fort now included about 190 men including armed civilians.

Despite the military architecture, or lack thereof, the little fort was not without its defenses. It had two 12 lb. howitzers, two six-pounders and one 24-pounder. When the Dakota did attack on Wednesday at about noon with 500 warriors, the cannon were used to good effect. Gere led the troops at the northwest entry into the fort, armed with one cannon and a force of riflemen.

There were six hours of “incessant combat.” The soldiers stood their ground.

The women in the stone barracks occupied themselves by making artillery cartridges and case shot. “The prayers and tears of the unemployed lent pathos to a scene whose dramatic equal the American Frontier had never witnessed.”

On Friday, the Dakota returned, this time in greater numbers, perhaps 7-800 warriors strong. But again the cannon and the determined army and civilian defenders kept them at bay.

There were no more attacks, but the siege went on until Aug. 27 when soldiers from Fort Snelling, under the command of Henry Sibley, finally arrived “amid cheers and tears of joy.”

Sibley, with 1,600 troops, was able to defeat the Dakota in the Battle of Wood Lake on Sept. 23. The fighting was over. Many Dakota surrendered and others were captured. Over 300 Dakota were convicted in abbreviated trials and sentenced to die. In the end, with the intervention of President Abraham Lincoln, 38 actually were hung at Mankato.



Fort Ridgley as it looked when Thomas Gere found himself in charge during the Dakota Uprising.

Gere had seen his first action as an officer, and had performed well. His leadership was critical in the early hours.

Company B finally left the fort on Nov. 9, with high hopes of finally getting into the real war. They first, though, had to escort 1,800 Dakota women and children to Fort Snelling, where they were imprisoned on a nearby island through that winter.

Gere was promoted to first lieutenant on Nov. 16, and he was named the regimental adjutant.

**B**y Dec. 16, 1862, the Fifth Regiment was in Oxford, Mississippi.

The regiment had traveled by foot, by steamboat and by train to Chicago, Kentucky and finally to Oxford. On New Year’s Eve, Gere wrote in the journal he kept throughout the war, “We have no baggage, no teams, no rations. We are hunting for the Rebs.”

The hunt went on into January. On Jan. 4, he wrote, “All this time we are profoundly ignorant of any object in our movements.” Welcome to the Army.

By Jan. 9, the Minnesotans had gone 11 days without provisions. “The poultry yards and bee hives suffered, and every horse found on the trip was taken.” On the 12th, the regiment finally got its tents, blankets, valises which they had not seen for 23 days. Gere said it was “unspeakable joy.”

On Jan. 17, Gere marked his first anniversary in the Army. “The war does not seem so near an end as it did when we enlisted.” The regiment continued to move from area to area around the South without much contact with the enemy.

In a letter to the *Chatfield Democrat* on March 10, 1863, Gere said there were 560 men left in the regiment “all ready for a fight.” The toll in Company B to that point was fairly grim. They had started with 87 men and now had 52. They had lost 24 in Minnesota and 11 others to wounds or illness along the way.

On March 18, the regiment’s adjutant quit and Gere, still 20 years old, was made acting adjutant. A week later he became the adjutant.

By May, the Fifth Minnesota was part of the assault on Vicksburg, and on May 14 the regiment was in the vanguard in the attack on Jackson, Mississippi. “Jackson is ours,” Gere wrote. “And the Fifth has glory enough.” The next day, he observed the deserted state capital. “State House, Auditor’s Office, K.G.C. (a pro-slavery organization); Senate; soldiers plundering; clothes of all kinds; darkies; women following the crowd for plunder.”

It was rare that the regiment spent more than a few days in one position. On June 20, Gere was able to do a side trip down the side of the Mississippi opposite the besieged Vicksburg. Using field glasses, he “got a fine view of the town. I could plainly see the Rebs on the other side of the river. This has been one of those romantic days.”

On July 4, 1863, Vicksburg fell to Grant’s Army. “Today the Gibraltar has fallen. How I have wished myself at home today.”

In August, Gere took advantage of a perk available to



The Battle of Nashville where Gere earned his Medal of Honor by capturing a regimental flag from the Confederate Army.

officers. He went home. By the 18th, he had debarked at Winona, and by that evening he was at home in Chatfield with his parents. “Our folks are taken by surprise.”

By September, he was back to war as the 5th Minnesota seemed to keep constantly on the go in the Vicksburg and Memphis areas. On Dec. 11, they traded in their old Whitney rifles for brand new Springfields.

On April 9, 1864, the Fifth got a good dose of action when it fought in the battle of Pleasant Hill, Louisiana. “The fighting was desperate for about two hours, and the loss was heavy. Charge after charge upon our position attested to the valor of the rebs, but they were completely routed. We drove them more than three miles... The ground was literally strewn with dead and wounded.”

That night, it was the turn of the federal forces to retreat in haste, a situation that did not sit well with Gere or his comrades. “At 3 in the morning we left the field leaving our own dead unburied and many wounded uncared for! May I never witness another occasion like this!”

On March 7, Gere was named the acting assistant adjutant of the brigade, working on the staff of Col. Lucius Hubbard, the former commander of the Fifth Minnesota who had been promoted.

The rancor in the troops with their ultimate commander (Maj. Gen. Nathaniel P. Banks) was strong. On March 10, Gere wrote: “Two months ago today we left Vicksburg. We are tired enough of this country and sick of the way affairs are managed, but willing would stay two months longer if we had a commander to lead us to Shreveport.”

Gere said the problem was not with the troops. “They are desperate and will fight hard if we get a chance.” Banks was eventually removed from command.

In June, 1864, the entire regiment went home on a furlough. A clipping from the “St. Louis Daily” in Gere’s journal notes that the regiment had lost 465 men to that point, and that the strength of the unit was down to 247 men.

Gere got home on July 4, 1864, and encountered “dances, parties, boat rides, sweet music and walks.” He wrote about those days in Chatfield as “naught but pleasure, long to be remembered.”

In August, the Fifth Regiment was back in action again, once again in the deep south. In one stretch, from mid-September until Oct. 5, 1864, the regiment marched 307 miles in 19 days. “The command is somewhat ‘used up,’ at least it ‘needs repair;’ many of the men are barefooted and we are on quarter rations.”

On Nov. 25, the regiment experienced something they probably never thought of when they signed up. The unit was aboard a steamship heading north on the Mississippi. “We awoke with a crash and got up in a hurry to find our boat had struck an old wreck and was sinking.” The men were transferred to other boats, although two drowned in the experience.

**B**y mid-December the Fifth Regiment was entrenched around Nashville facing a Confederate army under the command of Gen. John Bell Hood. On the 16th, the Fifth Regiment, as part of the Second Brigade, First Division, 16th Army Corps, attacked the Rebel position. Joining the Fifth in the Brigade were the Seventh, Ninth and Tenth Minnesota Regiments.

In letters and in his journal, Gere described the attack. “Our Division is massed; we storm a work of the enemy, carry it; capturing four guns; then another work, and two more guns!” Gere wrote. “Our brigade swings to the left and makes a glorious charge on the rebel line, the enemy runs like sheep, we capture many prisoners. Glorious!”

In the last charge, Gere was struck by a musket ball on his wrist, a troubling but not serious wound.

At 3 a.m., the Fifth Minnesota was awoken by the reveille of the Confederate forces – directly in front of their position. They knew the Rebels were making a stand and the battle would continue. “Everything indicated that the rebel leader had determined to yield no more ground.”

The next day dawned fair with scattered clouds, but by three in the afternoon, the sky has darkened and the rain began. The division advanced to about 300 yards of the enemy and was pinned down by rifle fire. At 4 p.m., the order is given to charge across the muddy, open cornfield. The rebel line “burst forth a red and blue flame and the messengers of death fell like hail upon our ranks,” he wrote in a letter home.

“A fearful charge, hundreds fell, but we captured the works with prisoners by the thousands. ‘Twas a fiery ordeal. It was indeed trying to go through that storm of grape, canister, and musket balls – We who got through wonder how we escaped.”

Col. Lucius Hubbard, leading the Brigade, had two horses shot from under him. Lt. Col. William Gere, Thomas Gere’s brother, led the Fifth Regiment and also lost his horse. Four color sergeants were shot down, and in each case the colors were grabbed by those behind before they could hit the ground. Finally, the Fifth Regiment’s colors, riddled with canister shot, stood atop the rebel works. “A wild cheer of triumph soon proclaimed that the works were ours.”

As the enemy fled, Gere, on horseback, wheeled and pursued the enemy along the wall and sharpened trees the Confederates had constructed as its defense. “I reached the works to the right of the brigade, but my horse would not

# Taps

**Boe, Gerald M.**, 88, Army veteran of World War II, died April 11, 2015. He was captain of the guards for the Nuremberg Trials in 1946. He was a member of Pequot Lakes Post 49.

**Vande Griend, Irwin**, 86, Army veteran of the Korean War, died April 8, 2015. He served in Germany. He was a member of Edgerton Post 42.

**Finazzo, Benedict**, 88, Navy veteran of World War II, died April 12, 2015. He was a member of Cold Spring Post 455.

**Einertson, Marvin A.**, 86, Army veteran of the Korean War, died March 21, 2015. He was a radio operator stationed at Fort Bragg. He was a member of Windom Post 206.

**Dietel, Raymond A.**, 88, Navy veteran of World War II, died March 19, 2015. He was an aviation metalsmith. He was a member of Lester Prairie Post 463.

**Rodenberg, Kenneth Allen**, 70, Army veteran of the Vietnam War, died March 26, 2015. He served two tours in Vietnam and then served in Germany. He served in the Army for 16 years. He was a past commander of Lakefield Post 4.

**Leyendecker, Mathias**, 91, Army veteran of World War II, died March 31, 2015. He was a member of Paynesville Post 271.

**Leyh, Rodney**, 85, Army veteran of the Korean War, died March 28, 2015. He was a member of Bertha Post 366.

**Warren, Cedric**, 85, Navy veteran of the Korean War, died March 15, 2015. He was a master chief. He was 10th District Adjutant and he also served as a district vice commander. He was a past commander of Eden Prairie Post 409.

**Matuska, Dennis D.**, 72, Marine Corps veteran of the Vietnam War, died March 20, 2015. He served on the USS Belle Grove in southeast Asia. He was a past adjutant, membership chair and honor guard member of Glencoe Post 95.

**Oelkers, Robert Henry**, 89, Army veteran of World War II, died April 6, 2015. He was a member of Pine Island Post 184.

**Peppersack, Arthur R.**, 92, Army veteran of World War II, died March 29, 2015. He was an armored car driver in 93rd Cavalry, 13th Army Division. He was a member of Cottonwood Post 503.

**Plasek, John Rudolph**, 81, Army veteran of the Korean War, died March 29, 2015. He was a member of Pine City Post 51.

**DeBettignies, Thomas Jerome**, 89, Army veteran of the Korean War, died March 28, 2015. He was a member of Alexandria Post 87.

**Buys, Gerald**, 81, Army veteran of the Korean War, died April 5, 2015. He served in Germany. He was a member of Chandler Post 338.

**Hartle, Robert W.**, 81, Army veteran of the Korean War, died April 4, 2015. He served in Austria. He was a member of Chandler Post 338.

**Johnson, Ormand**, 90, Army veteran of World War II, died April 6, 2015. He served in New Caledonia and Leyte. He was a past commander of Thief River Falls Post 117.

**Mueller, Eugene**, 85, Army veteran of the Korean War, died April 8, 2015. He was a member of Cold Spring Post 455.

**O'Brien, Richard Sr.**, 81, Army veteran of both the Korean and Vietnam Wars, died April 5, 2015. He was a career soldier. He was a member of Park Rapids Post 212.

**Marts, Garland**, 81, Air Force veteran of the Korean War, died April 3, 2015. He served for nine years. He was a

member of Park Rapids Post 212.

**Kochmann, Clarence**, 88, Army veteran of World War II, died April 11, 2015. He was a member of Park Rapids Post 212.

**Mjelde, Wallace "Sonny,"** 94, Army veteran of World War II, died April 11, 2015. He served in Europe. He was a member of Fergus Falls Post 30.

**Sparke, Carl E.**, Army veteran of the Korean War, died March 31, 2015. He was a member of Albert Lea Post 56.

**Troe, Gerald E. "Edd,"** 76, Army veteran of the Vietnam War, died March 29, 2015. He was a member of Albert Lea Post 56.

**Haase, Vernon L.**, 93, Army veteran of World War II, died March 6, 2015. He was a member of Albert Lea Post 56.

**Shea, William L.**, 101, Army Air Corps veteran of World War II, died March 3, 2015. He flew 23 combat missions in B-24s in the South Pacific. He was a member of Albert Lea Post 56.

**Dirkes, Linus P.**, 74, Army veteran of the Vietnam War, died March 5, 2015. He was a member of Albert Lea Post 56.

**Hendricks, Robert J.**, 98, Army veteran of World War II, died April 3, 2015. He was a staff sergeant in Company H, 382nd Infantry, 96th Division. He was a member of Stephen Post 390.

**Serbus, George "Lonesome George,"** 84, Army veteran of the Korean War, died April 5, 2015. He was a member of Hector Post 135.

**Strack, Joan**, 76, Fourth District President of the Auxiliary, died April 8, 2015. She was a member of North End Unit 474.

**Shelstad, Bennie H.**, 90, Army veteran of World War II, died April 10, 2015. He served as district vice commander and was a past commander of Kenyon Post 78. He was a volunteer driver for the VA.

**Kranitz, Fred E.**, 70, veteran of the Vietnam War, died March 12, 2015. He was a member of Champlin Post 600.

**Jessen-Klixbull, Ole**, 71, Army and Marine Corps veteran of the Vietnam War, died April 4, 2015. He was a member of Cold Spring Post 455.

**DeBaere, Edward**, 82, Navy veteran of the Korean War, died March 26, 2015. He was a member of Marshall Post 113.

**Schmidt, Alan G.**, 66, Air Force veteran of the Vietnam War, died March 29, 2015. He was a member of Pequot Lakes Post 49.

**Norman, Roger James**, 71, Army veteran of the Vietnam War, died March 2, 2015. He served in the 2nd Transportation Company, USARY, as a heavy duty vehicle driver and sharpshooter. He served in Vietnam. He was a member of Roseau Post 24.

**Schultz, Leon Frank**, 88, Navy veteran of World War II, died March 16, 2015. He served on the USS Walke in the South Pacific as a gunner's mate third class. He was a member of Roseau Post 24.

**Kreger, Howard G.**, 97, Army veteran of World War II, died March 6, 2015. He served in the Signal Corps. He was a member of Hopkins Post 320.

**Anthony, Robert P.**, 94, Navy veteran of World War II, died March 22, 2015. He was a member of Hopkins Post 320.

**Ess, Corlett J.**, 89, Navy veteran of World War II, died April 2, 2015. He was a member of Hopkins Post 320.

**Zeller, Leroy H. Sr.**, 79, Marine Corps veteran of the Korean War, died March 27, 2015. He was a member of Hopkins Post 320.

**Johns, Harry Edward**, 91, Navy veteran of World War II and the Korean War, died March 31, 2015. He was a member of Hopkins Post 320.

**Noethe, Herman**, 84, Army veteran of the Korean War, died March 20, 2015. He drove a truck in Korea, and was part of the prisoner exchange. He was a member of New London Post 537.

**Quisberg, Paul**, 69, Army veteran of the Vietnam War, died March 23, 2015. He was a member of New London Post 537.

**Fiene, Roland L.**, 93, Army veteran of World War II, died March 20, 2015. He served in the Pacific. He was a charter member of Wood Lake Post 556.

**Grob, Richard L.**, 92, Army veteran of World War II, died March 23, 2015. He was a member of Waseca Post 228.

**Forsline, William F.**, Army veteran of the Korean War, died March 18, 2015. He served in Germany as a radio operator. He was a member of Chisholm Post 247.

**Buley, James**, 91, Navy veteran of World War II, died April 11, 2015. He served on the St. Lo, an escort carrier that was sunk by a kamikaze attack at the Battle of Leyte. He was a member of Brainerd Post 255.

**Fieler, Edward**, 69, Army veteran of the Vietnam War, died April 11, 2015. He served in the 101st Airborne. He was a member of Brainerd Post 255.

**Shifflett, Norman**, 77, Air Force veteran of the Vietnam War, died April 18, 2015. He retired from the National Guard. He was a member of Brainerd Post 255.

**Garberich, Earl R.**, 93, Army veteran of World War II, died March 29, 2015. He was a member of Willmar Post 167.

**Hoglund, Richard C.**, 90, Army Air Corps veteran of World War II, died March 29, 2015. He was a member of Willmar Post 167.

**Easton, Elwin G.**, 91, Army veteran of World War II and the Korean War, died April 7, 2015. He was a member of Willmar Post 167.

**Poppe, Donald R.**, 88, Air Force veteran of the Korean War, died April 20, 2015. He served in the Strategic Air Command as a mechanic. He was a member of Morris Post 29.

**Lano, Henry Peter**, 82, Army veteran of the Korean War, died April 4, 2015. He was a member of Chaska Post 57.

**Busby, James W.**, 98, Army veteran of World War II, died April 10, 2015. He served at Bastogne. He was a member of Dodge Center Post 384.

**Fischaber, Tom**, 59, Air Force veteran of the Gulf War, died April 7, 2015. He retired after 23 years as a survival instructor. He was a member of Eden Valley Post 381.

**Hentges, Robert J.**, 81, Army veteran of the Korean War, died April 8, 2015. He was a member of Eden Valley Post 381.

**Aschenbrenner, Edwin T.**, 91, Army veteran of World War II, died April 9, 2015. He served with the 11th Airborne Division, 187th Glider Infantry Regiment, Company I.

**Simonson, Ethan "Blackie,"** 88, Navy veteran of World War II, died April 5, 2015. He was a member of Wheaton Post 80.

## Correction

**Mellema, Harlon Gilbert**, 74, Army veteran of the Vietnam War, died February 9. He was a communication specialist in Korea in the First Infantry Division. He was a member of Round Lake Post 461.

# Thomas Gere

Continued from Page 12

cross the abittis and wall." On the other side of the fortifications, the rebels were fleeing. "I was a little in advance of this movement. The color bearer leaped over the works towards our rear with the others, leaving the colors behind the works. I could not reach them, but I compelled him to recross and deliver the flag." He did.

The flag was that of the Fourth Mississippi Regiment, a veteran unit which, like the Fifth Minnesota, had survived a three years and dozens of battles in the war.

Gere presented the flag to the brigade, a trophy of great value and pride. "While we rejoice at the great victory, our hearts are filled with grief and sorrow for the loss of our fallen companions." Indeed, the regiment lost 14 killed and 92 wounded, or about 40 percent of its strength.

Gere's reward for his valor included being put in charge of a contingent of 17 men from the brigade, many of whom had captured rebel battle flags — although Gere was the only one to have captured a regimental flag. The group arrived in Washington D.C. on Feb. 20, and two days later, on Washington's birthday, he and other flag captors were ushered into the office of Edwin Stanton, Secretary of War. "The Secretary made up a little speech, thanking us and our commander, and told us we should each have a medal of honor." They also got a 30-day furlough.

Gere got his photo taken at Matthew Brady's studio, and headed back to Minnesota. A month later, he rejoined his unit at Spanish Fort, Alabama, and told his brother that there was some trouble at home, which he did not specify in his journal. His brother advised him to quit and take care of his "home duties."

On April 5th, with the war nearly over, Gere mustered out after three years, two months and 20 days of service. On his way home, he first learned the news of Lee's surrender, and then, days later, of the assassination of Lincoln.

He finally got home to Chatfield on May 15. "I lay aside the trappings of the 'grim visage war,' hang up my sword to rust on the wall and become a quiet citizen. 'Never again to dream the dream, That martial music weaves.'"

Gere lived to be 69 years old. He went into the railroad business in Iowa after the war, first as a surveyer and later as an executive. He was superintendent of the Chicago, St. Paul, Minneapolis and Omaha Railroad, and later was president of the Sioux City and Northern Railroad. He founded the National Linseed Oil Co.

Gere married Florence Howard in 1868. Their child died in 1870 and a year later Florence died of tuberculosis. In 1874, Gere married Mary Emma Sheppard, and they had three children.

He is buried at Arlington National Cemetery.

## Sources:

*Journal Kept by Captain T.P. Gere during the Civil War. Life in "Uncle Sam's Army."* The William B. and Thomas P. Gere Papers, Minnesota Historical Society collections. The Journal was originally a pocket diary written in pencil, but Gere transcribed it using a typewriter in 1865.

*A Scrap of History*, by Thomas P. Gere, The William B. and Thomas P. Gere Papers, Minnesota Historical Society collections. Gere wrote this late in life for his hometown newspaper, the *Chatfield News-Democrat*.

(This story first appeared in the Summer and Fall, 2013, editions of *Allies*, the newsletter of the Minnesota Military Historical Society.)



Thomas Gere's grave at Arlington National Cemetery.



# The Auxiliary Bulletin

No. 15-1

President Chris Ronning

May 2015

Secretary Sandie Deutsch

Department Headquarters, Veterans Service Building, St. Paul, MN 55155 651-224-7634

## The President's Column

By  
Chris Ronning



Here we are, already into May. Where has the year gone? Only three more months and I will pass the gavel to your next President.

April was a busy month, not only for me but for all the Unit members. I hope everyone sent in their annual reports so we can brag a little to National President Janet about what we have done for our programs and veterans in Minnesota.

Now you are probably going to say, there she goes again about membership. Oh yes, I am not going to quit until we are at goal or at least close to it. Membership Rallies are probably over, so now the calling should start to bring in membership. District Conventions are in full swing and membership should be brought by every Unit even if it is just one.

Units should by now have selected their girls state citizen. This is such a great program and I have the honor to be there again this year. I am proud to say that I will be the shack lady (Shirt Shack that is) this year. I am so excited, another adventure in the life of Chris.

I attended the Department Junior Conference, what great attendance. I want to commend the ladies from the Stewartville Unit for a job well done. Everyone enjoyed themselves, Juniors and Seniors alike. If you ever have a chance to stop at the Stewartville Post, make sure you look at the beautiful memorial in front of their Post.

I had the honor to conduct the ceremony to bring three Junior members into the ranks of Senior Auxiliary members. What a great honor that was.

Then onto the installation of the newly elected Honorary Junior officers. I want to congratulate them and know the Juniors are in good hands. Our newly elected honorary Junior Department President for this year is Bryce Soltis from Waite Park Unit 428 - congratulations again.

Mary Efta retired her granddaughter, outgoing Honorary Junior Department President Jules Efta. Jules, again thank you for a great job and best of luck in your future endeavors. Jules will also represent our Juniors as a delegate to the Junior National Convention in Baltimore.

I attended a banquet in St. Cloud, honoring all the volunteers at the St. Cloud VAMC. These are amazing people that put so many hours in at the facilities.

Onto Legionville for their annual Spring board meeting. A lot of work has been done on the new building and I hope you all have a chance to see it sometime.

Next I was on to North St. Paul for their Spring Fling, lots of good food and lots of silent auction items. 4th District Commander Dan and I had a few moments, when I caught him bidding on my item. Sorry Dan but I went home with it.

The next day with Erma Redden in tow, we went to the Wayzata Spring Gala, great time and silent Auction again. More items to bring home.

Duluth hosted the last Department Rally, seems like we just had our first one not too long ago. Duluth is one of my favorite cities.

On April 28th, Erma and I headed to Rochester to their Mother/Daughter Banquet, and I am proud to announce that we did not get lost. *Note from Secretary Sandie: This is being submitted before April 28th so we really don't know if they got lost or not. If anyone sees two lovely ladies wandering, send them in my direction.*

In closing I want to wish all the mothers a happy Mother's Day celebration with their family.

There will be many Memorial Day services throughout our state and I will have the honor to attend the Service at the Fort Snelling cemetery.

Remembering our loved ones on that day, by visiting them at their final resting place.

## Bryce Soltice elected honorary junior president

Jules Efta, Department Honorary Junior President, of the Argyle Unit 353 called the 52nd annual Department Junior Conference to order on Saturday, April 11th. Our many thanks to all of the members of the First District, as well as the Stewartville Unit 164 who helped to make this a most successful and fun Conference for our Junior members. Special thanks to JoEllen Isenberg, 1st District Junior Activities Chairman, Unit 164 President Wanda Prescher, Unit 164 Jr. Activities Chairman Myrna Welter and all the members of the Stewartville Unit and the 1st District who went way above and beyond to make the weekend very memorable for our Juniors.

Friday evening, April 10th, was a fun filled night of "Minute to Win It" games, crafts and snacks for those in attendance. The next morning it was down to business when Honorary President Efta called the Conference to order under her theme: "Juniors Are Gems Serving Veterans."

The Credentials committee reported 41 delegates, 6 delegates-at-large, 7 alternates and 3 Junior guests in attendance. Also present were 40 Senior guests.

The session included their business meeting, introduction of special guests, judging of the Junior Poppy craft entries, awards and the election of the 2015-16 Department Honorary Junior officers. Chris Ronning, Department President, Peggy Moon, Department Commander and Detachment Commander Dennis Henkemeyer spoke to our Juniors, congratulating them on their involvement in the programs of the American Legion Auxiliary. A graduation ceremony was held for three Juniors who turned 18 and are now Senior members. The three new Senior members are Kirsi Moody, Kassondra Sage and Amelia Welters.

The Junior Conference is for our Juniors, run by our Juniors. They serve on the credentials, nominating, resolutions and awards committees. We, as Seniors, need to listen to them and acknowledge their outstanding accomplishments.

The day's activities culminated with the election of our 2015-16 Department Honorary Junior Officers. Department President Chris served as the installing officer.

Those elected are:  
Honorary President – Bryce Soltis, Waite Park 428  
Honorary First Vice President – Kiana Coleman-Woods, Lino Lakes 566  
Honorary Second Vice President – Nya Johnson, Two Harbors Unit 109

Honorary Treasurer - Johanna Welter, Stewartville 164  
Honorary Chaplain –Emily Seipke, Two Harbors 109  
Honorary Sergeant-At-Arms – Liv Efta, Argyle Unit 353  
Our newly elected Junior Honorary President Bryce made the following appointments:

Honorary Secretary – Madison Sloves, Minneapolis 1  
Honorary Historian – Madison Deschene, Argyle 353  
Congratulations to each of you. We wish you every success in the coming year as you assume the leadership of the approximately 2,594 Junior members in Minnesota under Bryce's theme of "Juniors Blossoming The Lives of Veterans" using a hot pink Geber daisy as her symbol.

Efta was elected Minnesota's official delegate to the National Junior Meeting. The National Junior Meeting will be held in Baltimore, Maryland, in August at the time of the 2015 American Legion Family National Convention. If there are any other Juniors interested in attending the National Junior Meeting, please contact the Department office immediately.

Thank you to the many Seniors who help our Junior members. Our Juniors have done much to further the programs of the American Legion Auxiliary under your leadership and involvement.

There were six different contests and the entries were all spectacular. The following are the winning selections.

**POPPY CORSAGE**  
Class 1 1st Place - Lucy Dunaway, Forest Lake Unit 225  
Class 2 1st Place – Cami Magnuson  
2nd Place – Hailey Dunaway, Forest Lake 225  
Class 3 1st Place – Johanna Welter - Stewartville 164  
2nd Place –Amelia Welter - Stewartville 164

**POPPY HAT**  
Class 1 1st Place - Lucy Dunaway, Forest Lake Unit 225  
Class 2 1st place –Sydney Borntrager, Trimont Unit 373

2nd Place – Natasha Donnolly, Northrop 522  
Class 3 1st Place – Amelia Welter - Stewartville 164  
2nd Place – Johanna Welter - Stewartville 164  
**POPPY JEWELRY/ACCESSORIES**  
Class 1 1st Place - Lucy Dunaway, Forest Lake Unit 225  
Class 2 1st Place – Emily Suess - Monticello 260  
2nd Place – Kiana Coleman-Woods-Lino Lakes Unit 566  
Class 3 1st Place 1st Place – Johanna Welter - Stewartville 164  
2nd Place –Amelia Welter - Stewartville 164

**POPPY CENTERPIECE**  
Class 1 1st Place - Lauren Blatman  
2nd Place – Bailey Anderson  
Class 2 1st Place – Kimberly Johnson  
2nd Place – Emily Rudolph  
Class 3 1st Place -Amelia Welter - Stewartville 164  
2nd Place – Johanna Welter - Stewartville 164

**POPPY DONATION CONTAINER**  
Class 1 1st Place – No Entry  
Class 2 1st Place – Kylie Swanson  
2nd Place – Emily Suess - Monticello 260  
Class 3 1st Place-Johanna Welter - Stewartville 164  
2nd Place –Amelia Welter - Stewartville 164

**POPPY SCRAPBOOK**  
1st Place- Warren Unit 27  
2nd Place- Trimont Unit 378

### JUNIOR PRESIDENT'S PROJECT

Department Honorary Junior President Jules' special project this year was to make activity bags for the children of veterans to use while their parents are at appointment at VA Medical Facilities, including CBOCs, throughout Minnesota and western North Dakota. Almost 500 activity bags were made and distributed and \$944.00 has been donated to date.

Thank you to all the Units that provided funds in support of Jules' Department Honorary Junior President's Project.

### SECRETARY SANDIE'S CORNER

I am going to start out my "corner" by saying hi to a dear friend of mine. He says he reads my notes every month - HI VRZY. (We will see if he really does read this.)

Annual Reports seemed to have been well received, we have them sorted and out to the District Chairman for consolidation. I have also received many Department Award entries - good luck to all.

I am working hard on both Girls State and Department Convention. Please plan on joining us at Jackpot Junction for the Convention. I promise you will have a good time and learn many new things about what we do and who we are. President Chris always has a few surprises up her sleeve. Jean Forbord is working hard on the Musical Extravaganza and that always is a good time.

The annual Leadership Conference is being held in Indianapolis the first weekend in May. It is run by the incoming National President (if elected) and her chairmen. I will have to miss this one - have to help our son and future daughter-in-law plan their wedding. Another trip to Texas - darn it anyway.

### POPPIES

Governor Mark Dayton has proclaimed May as Poppy Month. Have you organized your Poppy distribution? We hope all Units are planning to place special emphasis on our Poppy program during May, educating the public on the meaning and purpose of the Poppy, and to actively participate in Poppy Day.

If your Unit has not ordered its 2015 Poppies, there is still time. We continue shipping the small Poppies as soon as they are received from the veterans who make them.

Thank you all for participating in this very important program of the American Legion Auxiliary.

### DEPARTMENT CONVENTION

The 96th annual Department Convention will be held at the Jackpot Junction Casino/Hotel on July 16-18, 2015. The Convention is being hosted by the Redwood Falls American Legion 38 Family. All Auxiliary sessions will be

# Auxiliary Bulletin

Continued from Preceding Page

held at Jackpot Junction.

Will your Unit be represented? A pre-registration form is available in this issue of the Minnesota Legionnaire. District caucuses will be held at 8 a.m. on Thursday. The parade will be held on Friday evening at 7 p.m. in Redwood Falls. A complete program will be printed in the Minnesota Legionnaire prior to convention time.

There will be two Poppy Contest this year - they are as follows:

### Butterfly Garden Basket

This basket will be made utilizing poppies, greenery, ribbon, and butterflies using Department President Chris' theme "Our Veterans - Past, Present, and Future". Small or large poppies may be used but remember to remove the white tags.

### Bouquet in a Vase

The bouquet will be made with small or large poppies using a patriotic theme. Remember to remove the white tags. Other silk flowers, greenery, and ribbons may be used but remember the emphasis is on the Poppy. Please be sure to put the bouquet in a vase of some kind.

Please be sure and bring all of your creations. They are always so beautiful.

## GIRLS STATE

The 2015 session of ALA Minnesota Girls State will be held June 7-12 at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul. All Girls State registration materials (enrollment card, information sheet, pledge and Capitol Day t-shirt order form) are due into the Department Office by May 1st. As of this writing 360 young women will have the experience of learning about Minnesota government by "doing". St. Thomas will again be our venue for us this year and we are looking forward to many new, exciting events.

About the middle of May each ALA Minnesota Girls State citizen will receive her packet of information from the Department. If your citizen has not received her packet by May 22nd contact the Department Office immediately. Do keep in touch with your ALA Minnesota Girls State citizen to answer any questions she may have prior to her coming to St. Thomas on June 7. All ALA Minnesota Girls State citizens are to be at the University of St. Thomas prior to the opening session at 3:00 p.m. on Sunday, June 7.

Special District ALA Minnesota Girls State buses have been arranged by several Districts. Check your District bulletin or contact your District ALA Minnesota Girls State Chairman for details.

## NATIONAL CONVENTION

Baltimore, Maryland, is the site for our 2015 National Convention. Delegates and alternates will be elected at your District Convention. Each District's representation is based on the District's 2015 membership as of July 28th.

In order to ensure its full delegate strength at the Convention, we ask that if you are nominated as a delegate or alternate and are not planning to attend, you withdraw your name from consideration. Information will be sent to each delegate and alternate as soon as it becomes available. Our National Convention will be held August 28-September 2, 2015.

## UNIT MAILING

The last Unit mailing of this Auxiliary year has been sent out. Though annual reports have been sent in there are still three months left of activities and programs in this year of "Veterans - Past, Present and Future."

Included in this last mailing were two delegate and two alternate cards for our Department Convention as well as a chart to help you determine your Unit's delegate strength based on your Unit's membership 30 days prior to the convention. (June 16) Additional cards are available upon request.

## 2015-2016 OFFICERS' LISTS

How time flies. All Units will soon be electing their 2015-16 officers. As soon as they are elected, please complete the form (two copies) sent to each Unit in the last Unit mailing. One copy should be returned to the Department Office as soon as possible. The other copy is for your District President-Elect. The due date for this information is June 12, earlier if possible. This form is not the same one your Unit sent in for the 2016 direct billing last winter. We will send your 2016 membership supplies and cards to your 2015-16 Membership Chairman, as per the information you send in now. This form can also be found on our website,

### Thank You

Thank you for all the prayers, emails, cards, letters, and phone calls as I have been fighting this battle with cancer. I am recuperating well after the second surgery, and things are looking positive. I feel so blessed to be a part of our wonderful American Legion Family. God bless each of you.

**Lori Skallerud**  
National Northwest Division Vice President

mnala.org. You can fill it out and email it to the Department Office.

We are asking for the names/addresses of your Unit President, Secretary, Treasurer and Membership Chairman for the 2015-16 year. Be certain the address for each officer is her current address.



OPAL STOKES



JOAN STRACK

## IN MEMORIAM

It is with great sadness to report the passing of our 1988-1989 Department President Opal Stokes in April of this year. Opal was a very active member in the Auxiliary holding just about every program chairmanship there is and was a mentor to all, especially her Monticello Unit 260. She will be missed by all.

Also, we lost our 4th District President Joan Strack in the month of April. Joanie was the 4th District President in 2002-2003 as well. All of us send our sympathies and prayers to the families of both of these wonderful ladies. Rest in peace and thank you for your dedication and contributions to our organization.



**4,000 HOURS** -- American Legion Auxiliary Hospital Home Representative Janet Benson receiving her 4000 hour certificate from the St. Cloud VAMC. President Chris Ronning was present at the Annual Recognition Dinner as well.



Outgoing Honorary Junior President Jules Efta swears in newly elected President Bryce Soltice.

### April 25, 2015, Auxiliary Membership

District	Goal	Membership To Date	Percent of Goal	Membership Last Year
One	5,847	4,968	84.97%	5,149
Two	5,693	4,853	85.25%	5,045
Three	5,019	4,346	86.59%	4,396
Four	870	740	85.06%	772
Five	1,019	849	83.32%	946
Six	7,072	5,962	84.30%	6,237
Seven	4,565	3,920	85.87%	4,056
Eight	1,956	1,633	83.49%	1,730
Nine	5,060	4,255	84.09%	4,465
Ten	6,022	5,181	86.03%	5,317
1982	174	129	74.14%	150
<b>Totals</b>	<b>43,297</b>	<b>36,836</b>	<b>85.08%</b>	<b>38,263</b>

# Poppy Program

Poppy Days have become a familiar tradition in almost every American community. The American Legion adopted the red poppy as the national memorial flower on September 29, 1920 and in October that year so did the Auxiliary of The American Legion. In connection with the developing of the Poppy industry in Minnesota, is Mrs. O.A. Clark of Minneapolis who without salary, gave practically her whole time during the winter of 1922 to teaching the making of the Poppies to the patients and preparing them for shipment. The Poppy Program was made one of our national programs in 1924.



MARY KUPERUS

Connecting the visual image of the poppy with the sacrifice of service made by our veterans has been an important goal of the American Legion Auxiliary Poppy Program since its inception in 1921. Millions of red crepe paper poppies are distributed across the country in exchange for donations that go directly to assist disabled and hospitalized veterans in our communities.



Junior leadership puts the squeeze on newly elected Honorary President Bryce Soltice.

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June 24-28, 2015

**Tour Includes:**

- Escorted by Glen Parsons and 4-Seasons Tour Director, Larry Alvey
- Roundtrip Delta flights from Minneapolis to New York City
- 1 night pre-departure hotel accommodations in Minneapolis
- 3 nights accommodation at Row NYC
- Lunch at Carmine's on Broadway
- Manhattan Island city tour
- Broadway performance, "Aladdin"
- Broadway performance, "Lion King"
- 9/11 Memorial and Museum
- Harbor Cruise with lunch



**\$2,279.00**  
per person double occupancy

### Alaska Tour and Cruise

August 7-19, 2015

**Tour Includes:**

- 4-Seasons Tour Director, Jenny Gilbertson
- Roundtrip Delta flights from Minneapolis to Fairbanks and return from Vancouver to Minneapolis
- Accommodations at superior and deluxe hotels
- All sightseeing/entrance fees as outlined in the itinerary
- A 7-night southbound cruise on the Coral Princess
- All meals and entertainment while aboard the Coral Princess
- Cruise gratuities
- All transfers to and from the airport and pier

**Starting at \$3,899.00**

**PASSPORTS REQUIRED**

### Canadian Islands

August 23-September 2, 2015

**Tour Includes:**

- 4-Seasons Tour Director, Joyce Langerud
- Deluxe Motor Coach Transportation
- 10 Nights accommodations
- 19 Meals
- Gaming at the CASION DE CHARLEVOIX
- Guided tour of the Beautiful Island of Coudres
- Guided tour of Montreal & Quebec City
- Visit to picture-perfect BAIE SAINT-PAUL in Charlevoix
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**PASSPORTS REQUIRED**

Double \$1,359.00 per person  
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### Glacier National Park

By Amtrak July 16-24, 2015

**Tour Includes:**

- 4-Seasons Tour Director, Jenny Gilbertson
- Roundtrip Amtrak coach seats to Glacier Park
- 6 nights' hotel accommodations
- Luggage handling for one suitcase
- 15 meals
- Going to the Sun Road via the REDS
- Cruise on Swiftcurrent & Lake Louise
- Entrance fees to Glacier National Park
- UNESCO Heritage Site-Head Smashed In
- Royal Canadian Mounted Police Museum
- Cruise on Waterton Lake to Goat Haunt



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### Autumn in New England

September 29-October 7, 2015

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- Roundtrip Delta Airline flights between Minneapolis and Boston
- 8 Nights quality accommodations
- 15 Meals
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### Mackinac Island & Door County

July 19-25, 2015

**Tour Includes:**

- 4-Seasons Tour Director, Joyce Langerud
- Deluxe Motor Coach Transportation
- 6 Nights accommodations
- 12 Meals
- Carriage Ride on Mackinac Island
- Lunch at the Grand Hotel
- Soo Locks Lunch Cruise
- Fish Boil in Door County
- And much more!



Double \$1,059.00 per person  
Triple \$1,039.00 per person  
Single \$1,329.00 per person

### Heart of Alaska

July 30-August 6, 2015

**Tour Includes:**

- 4-Seasons Tour Director, Sue Barber
- Delta Air Flights between Minneapolis & Anchorage
- 7 Nights Quality Accommodations
- 12 Meals including an Alaskan Salmon Bake
- Iditarod Travel Headquarters
- Travel the Alaska Railroad between Talkeetna and Denali Park
- Denali Park Natural History Tour
- Riverboat Discovery Cruise
- Chena Indian Village
- Sled Dog Demonstration
- Pan for gold at the Gold Dredge #8
- Prince William Sound Cruise
- Mears Glacier




Double \$3,299.00 per person  
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Single \$3,879.00 per person

### Albuquerque Balloon Fiesta

October 7-11, 2015

**Tour Includes:**

- 4-Seasons Tour Director, Jenny Gilbertson
- 4 nights accommodations at Embassy Suites
- 9 meals
- All transportation
- Evening glow of the Balloons
- Morning mass ascension of balloons
- Turquoise Museum
- Old Town Plaza
- Indian Pueblo Cultural Center
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