



Legionnaire

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For God and Country

September 2015

DeZurik steps aside after 10 years of wearing the red hat

After 10 years, Ray DeZurik will be hanging up his red hat.

DeZurik, 72, served as Alternate National Executive Committeeman for four years and six years as NECman, representing Minnesota on the National Executive Committee. His term will end at this year's national convention in Baltimore.

DeZurik, who now lives with his wife Patricia in a condo at Breezy Point, was born and raised in Little Falls, and graduated in 1961 in the last class at the old Little Falls High School. He worked at a gas station and went to St. Cloud University.

"I grew up in the country, and with eight boys, we played a lot of baseball. We built our own baseball field with a backstop." A pitcher, he played high school and American Legion baseball, and later threw for the Swan River amateur team. A car accident when he was 19 ended his baseball career.

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Minnesota's retiring NECman Ray DeZurik

Baseball 2015



Wayzata players do a flying dogpile to celebrate their state championship. Wayzata topped Eden Prairie 5-4 in 12 innings to win the 2015 Division I title at Chanhassen. (Photo by John Sherman)

Wayzata, Foley take state Legion BB titles

Wayzata and Foley battled their way through the two American Legion Baseball tournaments in early August and won state championships.

Wayzata defeated Eden Prairie 5-4 in 12 innings to win the title at the Division I Tournament in Chanhassen. Both teams then advanced to the national regional tournament at Bismarck, but neither team advanced to the World Series in Shelby, N.C.

Foley topped Moose Lake 6-2 to win the Division II Tournament in Morris.

Both teams advanced to the national regional held this year at LeSueur-Henderson. Foley made it into the single-elimination phase of the tournament unscathed and then defeated Carrington, N.D., 6-4, Hays, Kansas, 7-0 and Wisconsin Dells 1-0 to take the regional championship.

In the final game, Hunter Hamers pitched the shutout for Foley. The game was tied at 0-0 going into the bottom of the seventh, but Foley got a runner to third and then scored him

on a suicide squeeze.

There is no national tournament for Division II teams, made up of the smaller schools.

In the Division I Tournament, the annual banquet was held at Chanhassen High School. Patrick Reusse, StarTribune columnist, was the featured speaker and Dick Jonckowski was the emcee. Jonckowski is the voice of The American Legion World Series in Shelby.

At the banquet, Wade Adamson, Willmar, was presented with the Graduate of the Year Award while Jim Donohue, Edina, entered the Minnesota Legion's Baseball Hall of Fame. Over 500 attended the banquet.

Games began the next day, and after two days of double-elimination play, the four unbeaten were Wayzata, Eden Prairie, New Ulm Gold, and Austin. It was an interesting matchup between urban and rural baseball.

Wayzata and Eden Prairie are two of the largest schools

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Fall Conference slated for Breezy Point Oct. 23-24

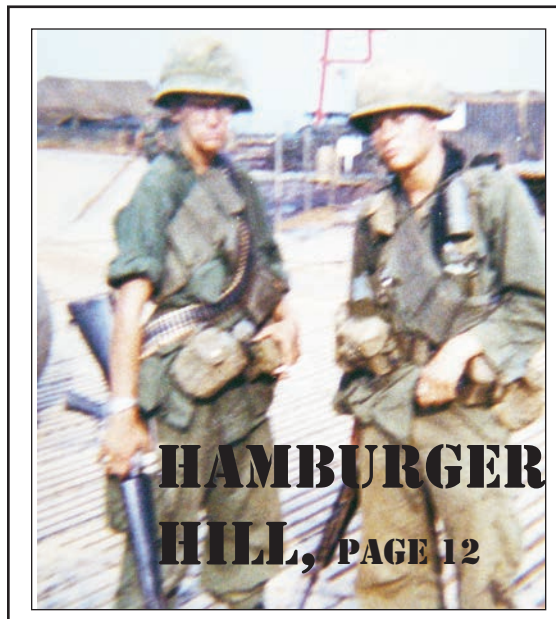
The 2015 American Legion and Auxiliary Fall Conference will be held at Breezy Point Resort near Pequot Lakes.

The event will be hosted by Pequot Lakes Post and Unit 49.

The annual "school of instruction" is open to all Legionnaires and Auxiliary, and the conference will be run as a joint effort this year.

Lodging has been set up at four area hostels: **Breezy Point Resort.** A standard room is \$97 per night and suites and lodges are \$139 per night. You can

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Minneapolis VA doing well, but Veterans Choice has rocky start

By Al Zdon

Things are going pretty well at the Minneapolis VA Medical Center these days, with one exception – the new Veterans Choice Program.

"It's been a rocky start," Minneapolis VAMC Director Patrick Kelly said. "What's happened so far is not acceptable to us, nor should it be to the veterans."

Veterans Choice was passed by Congress this past year as a response to

some of the national VA problems with long wait times for services and the distances some veterans must go for medical care.

The program allows veterans who have been scheduled for services more than 30 days out or who live more than 40 miles from a VA care facility to shop

around for local health care that will be paid for by the VA.

The experience for some veterans has been a struggle to work with the company hired by the VA to process Veterans Choice. Long waits on phone lines, confusion, red tape, and trying to

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“It's just like turning an aircraft carrier. It takes a little time. But we'll get better.”

-- Patrick Kelly

2015-16 Photo Contest winners

This year's Minnesota American Legion calendar photo contest asked for historical photographs from the posts around the state. These three top winners and nine others will appear in the Department's official 2016 calendar that will be mailed this fall.



FIRST PLACE, \$300 WINNER -- The American Legion Dance Pavilion was built by Breckenridge Post 53 with \$6,000 donated by members. It included a 100 by 50 foot maple dance floor along with a band shell, concessions, restrooms, a checkroom and rotary fans. It opened on June 19, 1929, to 1,400 dancers. Bands that played at the Pavilion included Glenn Miller, Harry James, Tommy Dorsey and Lawrence Welk. Other artists that played there included Conway Twitty, Bobby Vee, and Jerry Lee Lewis. It was torn down in the 1980s. Submitted by Tom Matejka.



SECOND PLACE WINNER -- \$200 PRIZE -- In 1949, Lake Crystal Post 294 celebrated the post's 30th birthday with a major event at the high school. The post had all of its World War I members pose for a photo. Dr. Fred Franchere, front row, second from right, was present at the Paris Caucus in 1919 where the Legion was founded. Photographer: Art Fleming. Submitted: Lois Davis.



THIRD PLACE, \$150 WINNER -- The West Duluth Post 71 Cubs posed for a team photo in 1931. The team played in what was called the Legion Junior Baseball program at that time. The post still sponsors the Cubs. Submitted: Mary Hendrickson

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Fall Conference

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reserve online at www.breezypointresort.com and entering group number 78864. Or call: 800-432-3777.

Leisure Suites of Breezy Point has standard rooms or suites, Commander Motel Rooms and condo at a variety of prices. Those interested should call for pricing. 1-888-651-5300.

The AmericInn Lodge and Suites in Pequot Lakes has two queen or one king bed rooms. Rooms on Thursday are \$80.91 and rooms on Friday or Saturday are \$107.91. Call 1-888-568-8400.

The Nisswa Motel has standard rooms for \$62 per night with a two-night minimum. Single nights are slightly higher. The phone number is 1-800-254-7612.

Official Pre-Registration

Mail to:
Legion Post 49 Fall Conference Comm.
P.O. Box 452
Pequot Lakes, MN 56472

A registration fee of \$15 for each person attending is required, with the exception of Junior SAL and Junior Auxiliary members. Please copy and send a separate form for each person. Make checks payable to **Post 49 Fall Conference Fund**.

Registration after Oct. 9 will be \$20.

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Help for veterans and families



LEGION FAMILY -- Department President Sandy Frederickson and First Vice President Carol Kottom paid a visit to the Department Executive Committee Meeting at Legionville in August. They were greeted by Department Commander Jim Kellogg.

DEC approves Commander Kellogg's 2015-16 committee appointments

Commander Jim Kellogg announced his appointments to Department committees and other positions at the Department Executive Committee meeting at Legionville in August.

The appointments include:

(Those already serving on a committee who did not need re-appointment are not listed.)

Larry Pocrnich of Hibbing was appointed to a three-year term on the Americanism Committee. Art Tobkin will continue as chairman.

Tom Hallett of Mankato will serve as Boy Scout Chairman, Bob Locker of Fridley as Community Service Chairman and Tess Davis of Princeton as Education Chairman. Mike Bredeck of Madison will be Boys State Director and Leon Dahle of Morristown will chair Junior Shooting Sports.

Debra Norman of Northfield will chair the Oratorical Contest and Linda Dvorak of LeCenter will serve as vice chairman. James Blakesley of Aitkin will serve as Safety-School Patrol Chairman.

Tom Sanders of Pine City will chair the Blood Program.

Terry Buraas of Grand Forks will chair Children and Youth Committee and Doug Wendlandt of Red Wing will be vice chairman.

Jennifer Kafka of Blue Earth will chair the Citizens Flag Alliance.

Don Hayden was reappointed to a five-year term on the Convention Corporation. David Bode will serve as parade coordinator.

Carl Moon of St. Joseph will chair the Employment Committee. Carl Hendrickson of Cloquet will chair the Energy and Conservation Committee.

Tom Bureau of Fergus Falls was reappointed to a five-year term on Finance Committee. Floyd Kumerow of Lambertson will serve as chairman. Commander Kellogg, Taopi, and Treasurer Dick Horn, Melrose, will serve as full members.

Tom Mullen of Eagan will represent The American Legion on the Fort Snelling National Cemetery Volunteer Committee. Mike Maxa of LeCenter will chair the Fund for Hospitalized Veterans Committee.

Tom Conway of Argyle was reappointed as chairman of the Law and Order Committee. Paul Hassing of Montgomery will be the liaison for the American Legion Riders.

Bill Barbknecht of Battle Lake was reappointed as chairman of the Legionnaire Insurance Trust Committee.

Roger Myren of Eagan will be the Department's Representative on the Legionville Board of Directors.

Peggy Moon of St. Joseph was appointed to the Legislative Committee, and Robert Hart of Stillwater will continue to serve as chairman.

Jim Lucas will be the Membership Director and the five Department vice commanders will make up the rest of the committee. They are: John Milbrath, Elysian, Don Amundson, Blue Earth, Carroll Partridge, Oakdale, Art Tobkin, Bagley and Darrel Redepenning, Fridley.

Jim Munson of Burnsville and Ferdie Haberman of Brewster were named to three-year terms on the Brain Science Foundation. Gary Olson of Moorhead will serve out Kellogg's one-year term.

Don Walser of Hutchinson was appointed as liaison to the Heart Research Foundation.

Wayne Hammon Jr. of LeRoy was reappointed to a five-year term on the Minnesota American Legion Foundation.

Denise Milton of Bagley was appointed to a five-year

term on the National Security/Foreign Relations Committee. Jay Beebe of Nisswa was appointed as a Member Emeritus.

Glenn Mueller of St. Charles will continue as chair of Operation Post Home. Chuck Stone of Owatonna will chair the Pheasant Feed Committee.

Bill Stein of Watertown was reappointed to a five-year term on the Post Development Committee. Jennifer Havlick of Two Harbors was re-appointed to a three-year term on the Public Relations Committee.

Bill Brockberg of Worthington was appointed to a five-year term on the Rehabilitation Committee. Jeff Olson of Green Valley, Ariz., was re-appointed to a three-year term on the Resolutions Assignment Committee and will serve as chairman.

Ray Ozmun, Northfield, was reappointed advisor to the Sons of the American Legion. Gary Weaver of LaCrescent was named vice chairman-South, and Walt Folendorf, East Grand Forks, as vice chairman-North.

Mike Perry, Minnetonka, was re-appointed to a three-year term on the Baseball Committee. Mike Gort, Marshall, was appointed to a one-year term replacing Al Davis who resigned. Davis was named a member emeritus.

Bob Mace, Waite Park, will chair the Bowling Committee.

Tom Fernlund, St. Cloud, was re-appointed to a five-year term on the Strategic Planning Committee. Roger Olson, Hutchinson, will serve as chairman and Richard Wog of Willmar will be secretary.

Don Pankake of Hutchinson was named to a two-year position representing The American Legion on the V4V Committee.

The DEC approved Kellogg's appointments.

In other business, the Executive Committee:

— Heard from Past National Commander of the Sons of the American Legion that the Detachment of Minnesota was at 11,300 members, or 105 percent of goal.

— Was told by Department Adjutant Randy Tesdahl that the Minnesota party on an excursion boat in Baltimore at the National Convention has passed 100 tickets sold.

— Accepted the turn-in of a charter for St. Paul Railroad Post 416. All members have been transferred to other posts.

— Re-elected Dick Horn of Melrose to a new three-year term as Department Treasurer.

— Re-elected Clinton Burt, Slayton, to a three-year term on the Board of Publications.

— Heard a report from Wayne Gilbertson, president of the Legionville Board, on the recent storm damage at Legionville School Patrol Camp. The camp added an extra session to accommodate those campers who had to be sent home because of the storm. Other campers from that session merged in with other sessions. He noted that the dedication of the camp's new educational building will be on Sept. 12.

— Heard a report from Membership Director Jim Lucas who said the Department's goal for the year was set at 79,929. The figure was later adjusted by National to 81,000. He also said the April rally for the membership year had been dropped.

— Was told by Kellogg that there would be a demonstration of Junior Shooting Sports at the Sept. 12 rally at Legionville.

— Approved an ad hoc committee to look at membership, constitution and bylaws, and membership awards. Kellogg was granted permission to appoint the committee which will serve during his term of office.

COMMANDER'S COLUMN

By Jim Kellogg



What a fun start to a great year. I had the privilege to attend the Division I American Legion Baseball Tournament banquet. Minnesota has the largest American Legion Baseball program there is, with over 300 teams in the two divisions and close to 5,000 players. Much can be learned from the game of baseball that can't be taught in a classroom. I can tell you from observing the conduct of the teams that our coaches are doing an excellent job. Hats off to them and the parents who spend countless hours in practice and traveling to games. I will say to every Legion Post that sponsors a team that your money is well spent. A good investment in our future leaders. Team play is something that is learned by experience and is a lesson for life.

I want to thank all of you who attended our first Department Exec Board meeting and also our Department Vice Commanders for preparing and serving the meal. To all of you who accepted a committee appointment for this

Sons of The American Legion

By Gene Olsword



I hope everyone has been enjoying all the hot humid weather of August. I am sure all our area lakes and community swimming pools have been favorite spots amongst many this summer. As for me, who doesn't do this anymore, the A/C has felt very good. This coming winter weather when the wind is howling and the weather is blustery, we remember these summer months.

The month of August came and went like a flash with visits around the state and a Detachment organizational meeting held in Anoka on 22 August where this year's program was outlined to all the officers with the finale being the National Convention in Baltimore. I will give you a recap of the Convention in my October article.

Before I go any farther, I would be remiss if I didn't mention our Past Commander Dennis Henkemeyer and Membership Director Paul Spyhalski for their carrying through with the 20-Mile Bataan Walk held in Duluth on 15 August. I wasn't able to attend due to a previous commitment but you two served the Detachment of Minnesota well and proudly. We are not in our twenties anymore like those guys would be who did that initial walk. We are all proud of you Dennis and Paul.

My slogan this year is "Filling our Nets with Membership." With the many lakes (American Legion Posts) we have in Minnesota, many of which do not have a SAL squadron, we should be able to fill our nets just with new squadrons. This year I am asking each District to start a new squadron. Just think what a minimum of 10 new squadrons would do in strengthening our Detachment but more importantly how this would strengthen the posts they would now be a part of. The support they could render their posts would be phenomenal and a great asset to that post.

More importantly though is the renewal of our current membership to see they renew to keep their membership current and be proud of their affiliation with the Sons and look for those which have fallen off our rosters. Search for these former members and find out why they have not renewed and work to affiliate them once again in The Sons of The American Legion. There is a reason they joined initially so see if you can find out why it was and remind them that reason still exists.

My project this year is Legionville in the amount of \$12,016. The 2nd District SALs gave money to Legionville for a bench in Memory of John Affolter so matching benches can be purchased to be placed near and around the new learning center. Excess to this amount will be given to the SAL sponsored Bike & Car Show held in Mankato each year. They could use more financial support for this great event. Your donations will be greatly appreciated.

Let's keep in our prayers all our service members at home and abroad who are constantly in Harm's Way to safely return home to their families and loved ones.

coming year whether it is in your Post, District or our Department, thank you. Now is the time to hit the ground running with your programs. A good start will make for a great finish. Along the way this year please take time to document your activities. This will make filling out your Post consolidated reports at years end much easier. You are making history every day.

Our American Legion Family Riders have once again had a very successful Legacy Scholarship Ride around Minnesota. I am looking forward to their presentation in Baltimore. Thanks to all the American Legion Family Members around the Department of Minnesota for your generosity. Another example of Minnesota nice.

Last month in your Legionnaire you saw pictures of the devastation at Legionville. Through many volunteered hours of hard work the camp was able to reopen the following week. Next month is our Disabled Veterans Deer hunt. Some of our deer stands are still inaccessible. If you have time or equipment to help clear some of the trails we will be able to accommodate our normal number of hunters. Your help will be much appreciated.

This year we are going to have three sessions around the Department for Membership enrichment. A letter will be sent to each Post with information. We hope you will take time to attend. It will be a time to learn more about what we do as well as share your experiences. We can all learn much from each other.

In closing, I hope to see many of you at Legionville Camporee and Harvest Rally. I think a fun weekend has been planned. School will soon be back in session. Fall Harvest is fast approaching. Traffic patterns will change every day. Be safe and God Bless.

American Legion Riders

By Scuffy Paulson



Greetings Brothers and Sisters. Hope everyone is getting plenty wind therapy this summer. Gotta give a huge shout out to our Minnesota Legion Family for such an awesome year. At last count we are over \$90,000 for the Legacy Run this year. What an amazing effort by everyone who went on the run and thank you to all the Legions that hosted the riders and donated. Also thank you to the Auxiliary and SAL for your hospitality and donations and last but not least much love to the MNALR family. You guys rocked it again this year.

Thank you Sully and the MNALR Legacy Run Committee. What an amazing job. Don't forget to mark your calendars for the MNALR Romp at Legionville September 25, 26 and 27th. Everyone is welcome. Cost is \$75/person and \$100 for family. Bring a hotel receipt from the Legacy Run and get \$50 off. Barracks with hot showers are included. Bring your own pillow, blanket and towel.

Contact Jody Hassing or myself if you have any questions. (507)450-8493.

Our "convention" is at noon on Saturday. We will have bands, biker games, food and beer. Pull tabs are available on site as well. Hope to see you all there. Keep da shiny side up.

Guest Editorial

Legion praises Soledad group

Calling for an end to a lengthy court battle, The American Legion is praising the Mt. Soledad Memorial Association for its recent purchase of land from the Department of Defense in order to preserve a 43-foot cross that was erected in 1954.

"I hope this ends it," National Commander Michael D. Helm said of the legal case that started in the late 1980s. "Frankly, it shouldn't have been necessary for the government to sell the land to a private group in order to preserve a memorial that is deeply significant to so many people. The American Legion believes in 'God and Country.' Unfortunately, some courts don't always see it that way."

Helm commended Rep. Duncan Hunter, R-Calif., and Sen. Diane Feinstein, D-Calif., for writing and passing legislation that made the \$1.4 million purchase possible. "The Liberty Institute has also been a fierce advocate for the memorial, which the Legion has supported through numerous national resolutions," Helm said.

The ACLU and Jewish War Veterans have sued to have the cross removed because they believe it infringes on their constitutional rights. A 2012 court ruling permitted a cross owned by the National Park Service in the Mojave Desert to be transferred in a private sale to the VFW.

The Mount Soledad cross in La Jolla, Calif., is part of a larger memorial, which includes more than 3,700 plaques honoring veterans of various wars. The land purchase is for the one-half acre plot of land surrounding the memorial.

Chaplain's Corner

By Richard Wog



Time moves on and stands still for no one. It seems like just yesterday we were at the Department Convention. The Department Executive Meeting was held in Legionville. Wayne and his crew of volunteers have done a wonderful job after the storm. I was impressed by the progress that has been made. If you haven't seen it, I do say it is certainly worth the time to make the drive. All of the donations that have been given is money well spent.

Summer is passing us by. It's the time for weddings, class reunions and also family reunions. We had a family reunion in Redwood Falls at Ramsey Park. It was a wonderful day and it was so good to see family that we might get to see every two years. Family is so important to each of us. The sad thing was that three days before the reunion this same group was at a funeral for a family member who passed away. He was way too young in my eyes to be taken away. However, it is not for us to decide who, or when, or why.

Now is the time to step up and raise your hand. For what you ask? To Volunteer. Remember when you were in the service? They would ask whoever wants to volunteer raise your hand or step forward. Take the time to visit our veterans in the veterans' homes or nursing homes. There are those who have no family to take the time to visit with them. I know there are those of you who are already doing that, and I thank you. However, if we can get more volunteers to visit it would mean so much to our veterans. You could even send a letter or a card. Believe me, it makes their day. You can see their eyes light up when you walk into their rooms. To all of the other Chaplains and to the other volunteers who take time to make visits; I say Thank You! I would love to hear from you, for you are doing God's work helping to take care of his children and by saying thank you to them for their service. This is just one part of the first of the Four Pillars.

Volunteering is only one part of Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation. There are homeless veterans, not just in the big cities; they are all over this great nation. Contact your local Service Officer to see if there is anything you and your post can do for the homeless, and all veterans who need our help. Heed the expression, "Charity starts at home." America is our home and our veterans are our responsibility. PTSD is such a quiet disease. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs estimates that PTSD afflicts almost thirty-one percent of Vietnam Veterans, as many as ten percent of Gulf War (Desert Storm) Veterans, and eleven percent of veterans of the war in Afghanistan. We can help in many ways. The sure way is through prayer for those with this terrible illness and also those who are just down on their luck. It may feel as if no one cares, but God cares for all of His children. Reaching out to Him in prayer makes a lot of difference for our veterans and for each of us. At times it seems like there is no hope. Open your Bible. Open it to Psalms twenty-three and start reading. I am sure anyone who reads this will know the love your God has for you. Please pray for our men and women serving our country. Also, keep Chaplain Steve Klinkner and his family in your prayers.

I have a story to share with you next month. Please take the time to read it. I would like to leave you with something to remember; never look down on anyone unless you are

The Minnesota Legionnaire

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Al Zdon, Editor

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What's Happening

Camp-O-Ree

The 46th annual Legionville Camp-O-Ree will be held Sept. 10-13 at Legionville Camp, North Long Lake, Brainerd.

Events include: Pull tabs on Thursday from 5-10 p.m. and Friday and Saturday from noon to midnight. Entertainment on Friday and Saturday, 8 to midnight. Bingo sessions on Friday at 2 p.m. and Saturday at 11 a.m. and 5 p.m. Kid's Games on Saturday including a medallion hunt and scavenger hunt.

In addition, there will be a Department Membership Rally on Saturday starting at 3 p.m. and the dedication of Legionville's new building at 2 p.m. also on Saturday.

Meals will include: Thursday, steak fry by the First District, 5 p.m. Friday, egg bake by the Sixth District, 9 a.m. and Pork Feed by the 10th District, 5 p.m. Saturday, breakfast in the dining hall by the SAL, Fish fry by the 6th District at 11 a.m. and BBQ by the SAL in the new building at 5 p.m. Sunday, breakfast by the SAL in the dining hall.

New this year, bring your own beer. Set ups only will be sold at the training center.

Camping fees vary by day: For adults, \$20 on Thursday, \$15 on Friday and \$10 on Saturday. Children under 3 are free, 4-14 are \$2 per person and 15-17, \$3 per person. This includes camper, tent on grounds or dormitory. Bring your own linens and blankets.

All proceeds go to Legionville. For more information, call 218-963-7750.

New Building Dedication

The new training center at Legionville will be dedicated on Saturday, Sept. 12 at 2 p.m. The ceremony will include past Department commanders, AAA of Minnesota, the Minnesota State Patrol.

The new pavers will be dedicated also, and there will be a ribbon cutting.

There may be fireworks in the evening.

Hangar Dance

The Fall Bomber's Moon Ball Hangar Dance will be held on Saturday, Sept. 12, at Fleming Field in St. Paul. Dance lessons will be provided by TC Swing, there will be a vintage costume contest, and music will be provided by the Roseville Big Band.

Tickets are \$15 at the door, or \$12.50 online. Doors open at 6 p.m., with the dance lesson at 7, dancing at 8, food and drink provided.

The event is sponsored by the Commemorative Air Force. Tickets are available at cafmn.org. For more information, call 651-455-6942.

Shakopee Luncheon

The Shakopee Auxiliary will host a casserole/salad luncheon on Wednesday, Sept. 16, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the clubrooms, 1266 E. First Ave., Shakopee. Cost is \$8.

Say Thanks Day

The Minnesota Military Appreciation Fund will host its 11th annual Say Thanks Day on Saturday, Sept. 12, at Base Camp at Fort Snelling. There will be a run/walk, family activities, live music, a ropes course, climbing wall, parachute jump and more. Participation is free for military members and their families.

The event will also host The Wall that Heals, a Vietnam Wall replica, at the Base Camp from Sept. 9-13.

For more information, go to www.thankmntroops.org.

MACV programs

The Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans will sponsor:

-- A free drop-in legal clinic for veterans on Tuesday, Sept. 22, from 10:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at the St. Cloud VA hospital auditorium, Building 8. The program will include housing, employment, benefits, wills, debt collection and family law. For more information, call 651-200-4750.

-- There will also be a free clinic on Tuesday, Sept. 8, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Minneapolis VA Medical Center.

-- A StandDown for veterans on Thursday, Sept. 24, at Grand Rapids at the National Guard Armory from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. There will be meals, claims and services, clothing distribution at 10 a.m., legal assistance, haircuts and more. There will be a legal clinic from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

For more information, call 218-722-8763.

-- A StandDown for veterans at the Bemidji Armory on Wednesday, Sept. 23, from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. with the same features as above.

-- The MACV Benefits Event will be held Friday, Sept. 18, at the St. Paul Riverfront Hotel. Go to mac-v.org.

Women's Health Event

The Minneapolis VA Medical Center will host an out-

reach event on Sept. 14 in the Flag Atrium Balcony from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Women veterans and families are welcome to attend. Representatives from many organizations will be present. There will be an awards ceremony at 12:30 p.m. For more information call 612-725-2100 ext. 2487.

Rendezvous

The third annual Veterans Rendezvous will be held at the St. Cloud VA Medical Center on Saturday, Sept. 19, from 1 to 4:30 p.m. There will be a mental health walk, live music, free hearing screenings, and a car and motorcycle show. For more info go to www.stcloud.va.gov.

WWII History Roundtable

The next meeting of the World War II History Roundtable at Fort Snelling Visitor Center will be Thursday, Sept. 17, and will feature "Blitzkrieg in the Pacific" with author Sharon Tosi Lacey. She will talk about island landings. Admission is \$5, and the meeting starts at 7 p.m.

Town Hall

Veterans who get their services at the St. Cloud VAMC are invited to a town hall meeting Wednesday, Sept. 9, at American Legion Post 255, Brainerd, at 5 p.m. Veterans are invited to bring their concerns for VA staff.

AV Flea Market

Vendors are needed for the Fall Flea Market sponsored by Apple Valley Auxiliary 1776. It will be held on Saturday, Sept. 19. For more info, call Marlene, 651-423-2493.

Golf Appreciation

There will be a Military Appreciation Weekend Sept. 18-20 at Hidden Greens Golf Course in Hastings. Active duty military and veterans get free green fees and family members get 50 percent off. Tee times and information available at 651-437-3085. There will be a family and kids event at 10 a.m. Saturday.

Legion leaders sought

The Minnesota American Legion is sponsoring three training sessions this fall in three different parts of the state. The sessions are aimed at up and coming Legion, Auxiliary and SAL members who want to know more about Minnesota's largest and best service organization.

South: New Ulm Post 132, October 3
Central: Clearwater Post 323, October 10
North: Grand Rapids Post 60, Oct. 17

The sessions will begin at 10 a.m. and end promptly at 3 p.m. Each will be geared for interaction between those attending and those presenting. We want to hear from you.

The Legion is especially interested in those members who usually don't attend statewide meetings. We are looking for future leaders.

And, we will pay for your mileage (one car per post) and your lunch. You can't beat that. Please fill out the slip below.

Name _____
 Post _____
 District _____

Which session are you attending? October 3, New Ulm
 October 10 Clearwater
 October 17, Grand Rapids

Mail to Jim Lucas, 765 12th Ave. SW, Pine River MN 56474
 Or email this information to hjucas@tds.net
 Deadline: Sept. 28, 2015



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Ray DeZurik has a collection of baseballs signed by Legion dignitaries that goes back many years.

DeZurik hangs up his red hat

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“My brother wanted to join the Navy Reserves and so I took him down there. Damned if I didn’t get sworn in before he did.”

DeZurik went to radio school in Bainbridge, Maryland, and joined the aircraft carrier USS Forrester on a Mediterranean cruise in 1965. “I would love to go back and see some of those places again. When we were in Rome, I got an audience with the Pope.”

He finished his active service in 1966, and stayed in the reserves until 1969. “It should be known that both (National Vice Commander from Minnesota) Al Davis and (Past Department Commander) Dennis Henkemeyer were also radiomen in the Navy, but they were only RM3s and I was an RM2.”

After the service, DeZurik went to Duluth Vocational-Technical School and did a year’s course on data processing. “I didn’t want to work at the paper mill in Little Falls.”

Soon after, he began his career at Fingerhut in St. Cloud, three long stints that encompassed 34 years. He later worked for Menard’s. “That was one of my favorite jobs. I didn’t have to manage anything. I just had to make sure everything fit for the customers.”

DeZurik’s Legion career began in 1967 at Sauk Rapids, and the next year he transferred to Waite Park because it was closer to Fingerhut. “I just got active. I had grown up on a farm and I was used to helping people out.”

His first elected office was chaplain. “I went to my first Sixth District mid-winter at Cold Spring, and I was amazed. People were talking about programs, and it was really interesting.”

DeZurik worked his way through the chairs at his post, and after serving as commander he went on to be county council commander. His involvement then moved to the district level, and he was commander in 1994-95.

He recalled the membership battles with other districts. “Roger K. Olson (Third District Commander) and I had a thing going on and it was very competitive. I think there was some cheating. They won all the awards all year long, but I had the first district at goal. I called up him and Neville (Dick Neville, Third District Membership Director) and I had a good laugh. RKO was not happy.”

DeZurik then worked as Department Membership Director under Olson, and later became Department Commander in 2000-01.

“It was a good year. We ended up 700 members from goal. I enjoyed getting out and meeting people. I enjoy people, and I like to talk about our programs.”

In 2005, DeZurik ran for Alternate NEC against his old friend Al Davis. “It was very close, but it made no difference because right after the convention Al and I were working together at the Division II baseball tournament.”

Through all of this, DeZurik parlayed his love of baseball into volunteer work with the Legion. He served as District 6 Baseball Director for eight years, and then served as a Department Vice Director in charge of the Division II tournament.

His shelves in his office are filled with signed baseballs. He has a signed Legion ball from every national commander in recent years except one.

DeZurik took it upon himself to start relaying information from the national meetings to the Legionnaires. “I just started summarizing for me and a few friends.” That email list that began with a few names now has over 200 addresses and is known by some as “Ray’s blast.”

He attended every meeting but one in his four years as alternate. At the meetings, he had a chair, but could not vote. DeZurik said that he and the NECman at the time did not have a close relationship.

In 2009, DeZurik ran for the NEC spot and won. With the help of Past National Commander Dan Ludwig, he was

soon appointed to the Resolutions Sub-Committee, a prestigious and important panel. Every resolution that came to the NEC had to go through that sub-committee.

“We would meet in the LeRoy Stone Room at National. We would bring in the committee chairmen and ask them what a resolution meant if we needed to. We’d have (Past National Commander) Jake Comer, Dan Ludwig or (National Adjutant) Dan Wheeler in to talk about the resolutions.”

Each NEC man serves as a liaison to a committee and DeZurik chose the Americanism Committee where he could keep an eye on the baseball program.

As NEC, he also continued to share the information he got at the NEC, this time expanding to the *Minnesota Legionnaire*.

“There are 122 people in the NEC, and it was an honor to wear that red hat. I got a lot of satisfaction out of it. I hope I did a good job.”

Minnesota’s NEC representatives have a four-year, two-term limit gentleman’s agreement, but DeZurik was persuaded after four years to run again so Minnesota would keep that job on the resolutions sub-committee. “Marland (Alternate NECman Ronning) agreed to it, and so I ran again.”

He was again approached about running for a fourth term this time around, but he chose to step aside. “It was time.”

His fellow Legionnaires say DeZurik did a great job.

“I felt he was very thoughtful and weighed issues earnestly,” said Davis. “I know from rooming with him several years at both baseball and national meetings, that he held all his positions with pride and sincerity.”

Davis said DeZurik, above all, was a great communicator.

“I will also miss his great sense of humor. He always seemed to have a smile on his face and was ready with a quip to make other people smile.”

Past National Commander Ludwig said DeZurik was “an extraordinary patriot and Legionnaire. His six years on the NEC were the absolutely best ever.”

Ludwig noted the importance of having DeZurik on the resolutions sub-committee. “It was a prestigious appointment, and Ray played a prominent role on the NEC. And he did it with class and style and honesty.”

Ludwig said DeZurik “did a great job for Minnesota. He will continue to be one of my partners as we make various decisions.”

DeZurik said his time in the Legion is not done. “I plan to stay active. I want to help and mentor younger vets. We need to grow and get stronger. Many of us are in our 70s and 80s now. We’ve got to get the younger vets involved, and I think we will.”

DeZurik said that as the Iraq and Afghanistan vets get older, they will have more time to devote to service organizations. “Once we have them, we need to get out of their way, and, at the same time, not burn them out.”

Even at the local level, DeZurik hopes to stay very active. He is transferring from his post of 47 years at Waite Park to Nisswa, closer to home. “It’s three hours there and back to St. Cloud, but it’s only 10 minutes to Nisswa. Just think of the extra time I’ll have.”

When DeZurik thinks of what The American Legion does in the nation, his eyes light up. “We’re not just a bunch of old guys smoking cigars and drinking in a bar. We’ve got all these great programs for kids and everybody else.”

DeZurik is sure the younger vets will join. “The Vietnam vets were reluctant, and in some cases they were not welcomed.” They now make up about 70 percent of the membership.

“We will flourish again.”

Veterans Choice

Continued from Page 1

determine if the provider a veteran chooses is in the required Health Net system have left some veterans with steam coming out of their ears.

“It all happened so quickly, and it was a new system for us,” said Kelly, a former naval officer. “It’s just like turning an aircraft carrier, it takes a little time. But we will get better.”

Congress requested that Veterans Choice be up and running in three months. Kelly said a more reasonable time table would have been 15 to 18 months.

The VA is excited about the program, though, he said. “It’s a new \$10 billion pot of money that we can use for veterans care. We can purchase health care for veterans in their communities, and it won’t affect our own budget.”

Kelly pointed out that the VA has been purchasing health care for veterans outside the system for many years. The Minneapolis VA, for example, spends over \$100 million a year buying community health care for state veterans, much of it nursing home care.

Veterans Choice, however, came with its own set of problems. Some hospitals, such as the Mayo Clinic, have declined to join Health Net. Veterans too must deal with things like co-pays and deductibles that they didn’t have to when simply getting VA care.

“If we make the arrangements, we take care of all the logistics. If a veteran uses Veterans Choice, they’re going to have to be more engaged in the process.”

Kelly said he doesn’t want to be critical of the vendor who handles Veterans Choice for the VA because they too battled the quick startup schedule. “But it is getting better, more user friendly. It’s better, but not completely fixed.

“I just worry that some veterans have tried it and didn’t get what they want the first time around. If Veterans Choice is the right program for a veteran, I trust they won’t lose hope.”

Kelly said there are about 15,000 of Minnesota’s 100,000 VA-enrolled veterans who are eligible for Veterans Choice. Of those, about 3,500 have made appointments thus far.

Many veterans who are eligible for Veterans Choice still opt for the VA system because they like the care even if it means a longer drive, he said.

A continuing nationwide problem is the number of veterans on waiting lists for treatment. Despite pressure from Congress, the VA has been unable to keep up with the ever increasing number of veterans seeking VA care. Aging Vietnam veterans and new Iraq and Afghanistan veterans are seeking VA care in record numbers.

In Minnesota, though, Kelly said the problem is much less than in other areas of the country. “We’re seeing more veterans, and that’s a good thing. We’ve got to be available, timely and accessible. For the most part, our access is pretty good.”

Toward that end, the Minneapolis VA has expanded service in three trouble areas: Audiology, eye care and orthopedics.

The new eye clinic at the Minneapolis VA has increased its patient load from 130 to 200 per day. More audiology booths have been opened including three new ones soon at the Whipple Federal Building.

In other areas, the Minneapolis VA has broadened its services in dealing with pain to include chiropractic and acupuncture. “We are working to find new treatments and work away from abuse of narcotics.”

The VA now has added robotic surgery in some areas, and now does surgery for those dealing with obesity.

As the demand on the hospital has grown, the hospital has also tried to grow too — with the help of ever-increasing federal money. In 2010, there were 80,000 enrolled in the Minneapolis system, and there are now over 100,000. Those enrollees had 700,000 appointments each year five years ago and now top 900,000 appointments a year.

To meet that demand in the same time span, the Minneapolis VA has increased the number of doctors from 207 to 276 and the number of nurses from 867 to 1017.

One area where Minneapolis has shined, Kelly said, is mental health care. “We are really good in that area. We have been able to recruit all the health professionals we need in that area.”

He said mental health care doctors are attracted to the VA because of the opportunity to do research and to have more variety in their work.

Kelly thanked The American Legion in Minnesota for getting the Brain Sciences Center at the hospital started and for its continuing support.

“They are still doing tremendous research for veterans, and now they are looking at research for more recent veterans.”

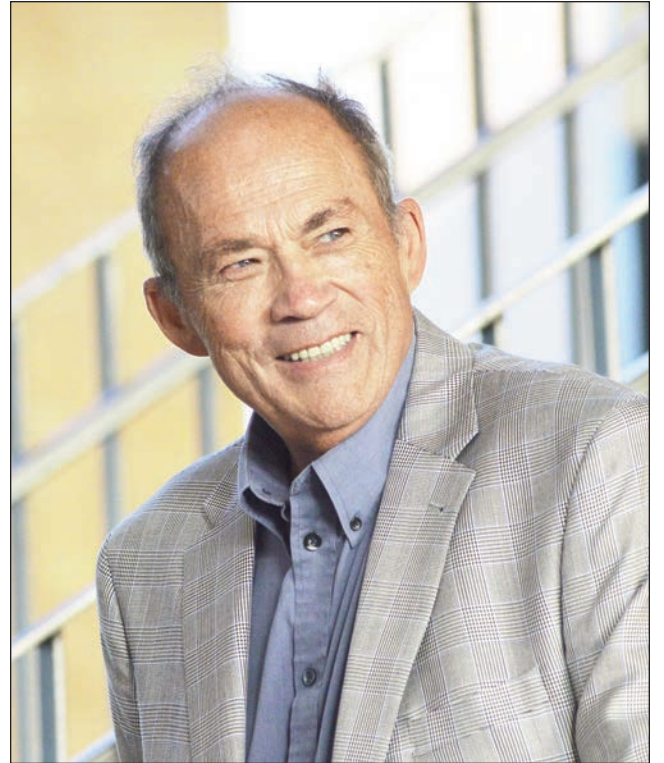
To sum up, Kelly said the effort to improve at the Minneapolis VAMC never wanes. “We realize we are a public institution and people can see what we do. If we find we are not doing something the best way, we will make it right. If something’s wrong, we will own it and we will fix it.”

“The veterans should have confidence in the VA. We do really good work here.”



All eyes are skyward as a New Ulm player pops one straight up vs. Eden Prairie.

2015 state baseball tournaments



StarTribune columnist Patrick Ruesse was the featured speaker at the Chanhassen Division I Banquet. He talked of his days in youth baseball.



Past National Commander Dan Ludwig talks to the Wayzata captains as he presents the 2015 Department Division I trophy at Chanhassen.



Wayzata's Cody Goedderz is welcomed by teammates after he pounded a homerun in a game vs. Eden Prairie.



Division II Tournament Most Outstanding Player Tyler Midas of Foley gazes skyward as he follows the arc of his home run, his third of the tournament. Midas had the touch with a double, two singles, five walks (three intentional) and five runs batted at the tourney in Morris.



Department Commander Jim Kellogg and Department Baseball Director Mike Perry talk things over just prior to the Division I banquet.