

The Minnesota American Legion and Auxiliary

Legionnaire



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For God and Country

January 2017

Planning for 2018 Centennial ramping up

Minneapolis will host 100th annual convention

Still a year and a half away, momentum is gathering for the 2018 national American Legion Convention to be held in Minneapolis Aug. 24-30, 2018.

It will be the 100th national convention, and a return to the city where the Legion held its first convention.

"Our first goal is for those attending to have a great experience in this beautiful city," Jeff Olson, chairman of the convention planning committee said.

Past National Commander Dan Ludwig agreed. "First and foremost we want delegates in 2018 to be inspired and excited that they have been a part of this convention."

The convention will include various activities in the weekend preceding the actual convention including a memorial service and the annual parade, which is planned for the Nicollet Mall in downtown Minneapolis.

"Downtown Minneapolis is going through a rebirth, with many new hotels and hundreds of eating opportunities."

"We want to put on a convention that will make the entire Legion Family proud," Olson said.

While the convention itself is planned and run by the national organization, Minnesota has been discussing ways to make it a memorable event. For instance:

— Each delegate may receive an authentic metal badge, similar to the badges that were worn historically at conventions.

— World War I doughboy re-enactors will greet delegates at the Minneapolis convention center.

Continued on Page 3



First Convention Badge, 1919

Fundraising will help convention and programs

If you're going to throw a party, you have to pay for it.

The Minnesota American Legion along with Mark Davy and Associates are beginning a major fundraising drive beginning with the new year. It will continue up until the time of the 100th annual convention in Minneapolis in August 2018.

The fundraising, however, will not just benefit the convention and its related Minnesota expenses, but donors will also have the option to give money to the various programs of the Minnesota American Legion.

"Over the next few months, corporations, posts and individuals will be contacted and will have an opportunity to contribute to either or both entities," said Jeff Olson, chairman of the National Convention Corporation of Minnesota.

Olson said the Davy firm was selected to raise funds because of their reputation for quality service for over 30 years. "They have raised millions for various groups over the years."

The goal of the fundraising will be \$1 million.

"Mark Davy & Associates recognizes the special privilege inherent in our relationship with The American Legion," Michael Davy said. "We believe that Legionnaires, posts and businesses throughout Minnesota will support this historic event through sponsorships, advertising and personal gifts."

Giving information is now available on the Department's website: mnlegion.org. Click on 100th National Convention Information.

Brochures are available for corporate giving and for post donations. Donors can check off either a gift to the convention, for use in mak-

Continued on Page 3

Legion Day at Wolves Feb. 12

The Legion Family Day at the Timberwolves this year is Feb. 12 in a game against the Chicago Bulls at Target Center at 2:30 p.m.

The Department Color Guard from Waite Park Post 428 will present the colors during the National Anthem.

Continued on Page 2



Schmidt Tour to make northern swing

National Commander Charles Schmidt of Oregon will do a sweep of northern Minnesota posts in early February, ending up in the Twin Cities.

Schmidt will begin the National Commander's Tour on Monday, Feb. 6, with breakfast at East Grand Forks Post 157. Lunch will be at Thief River Falls Post 117 and dinner will be at Bagley Post 16, the home of state Commander Denise Milton.

On Tuesday, Feb. 7, the tour will have breakfast at Bena Post 2001, lunch at Hibbing Post 222, and dinner at West Duluth Post 71.

On Wednesday, Feb. 8, the tour will head south with breakfast at McGregor Post 23, lunch at Pine City Post 51, and dinner at Elk River Post 112.

The final day, Thursday, Feb. 9, will feature breakfast at Buffalo Post 270, the home unit of Department President Carol Kottom, lunch at Richfield Post 435, and dinner at Mound Post 398.

Schmidt was elected National Commander this past August at the National Convention in Cincinnati.

He is an Air Force veteran who served 28 years. He started out as an administra-

tive clerk and completed his career as a commissioned officer. His duty stations included the United States, England, Germany, Philippines and Vietnam.

He retired as a major.

He joined a post in Missouri in 1984 and then switched to Burns Post 63 in Oregon. He was executive vice president of the Greater Oregon Federal Credit Union.

He served as Department of Oregon commander from 2004-05 and was Oregon's National Executive Committeeman for 11 years.

Continued on Page 2

CHARLES SCHMIDT
National Commander

Civil War paintings to remain in place at the state Capitol

History won out at the Minnesota Historical Society.

The MHS' executive council voted unanimously in December to keep six large Civil War paintings in the Governor's Reception and Anteroom at the newly renovated Minnesota State Capitol.

The renovation over the past two years opened the door for politicians and others to question the continued display of the historical art. The paintings had been commissioned and hung by Cass Gilbert, the capitol's famed architect.

Leading the charge to get rid of the paintings was Gov. Mark Dayton,

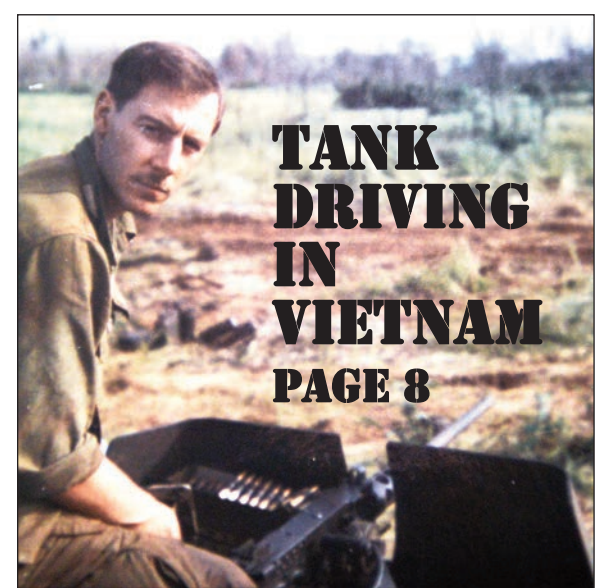
whose office at the Capitol is just inside the Reception Room.

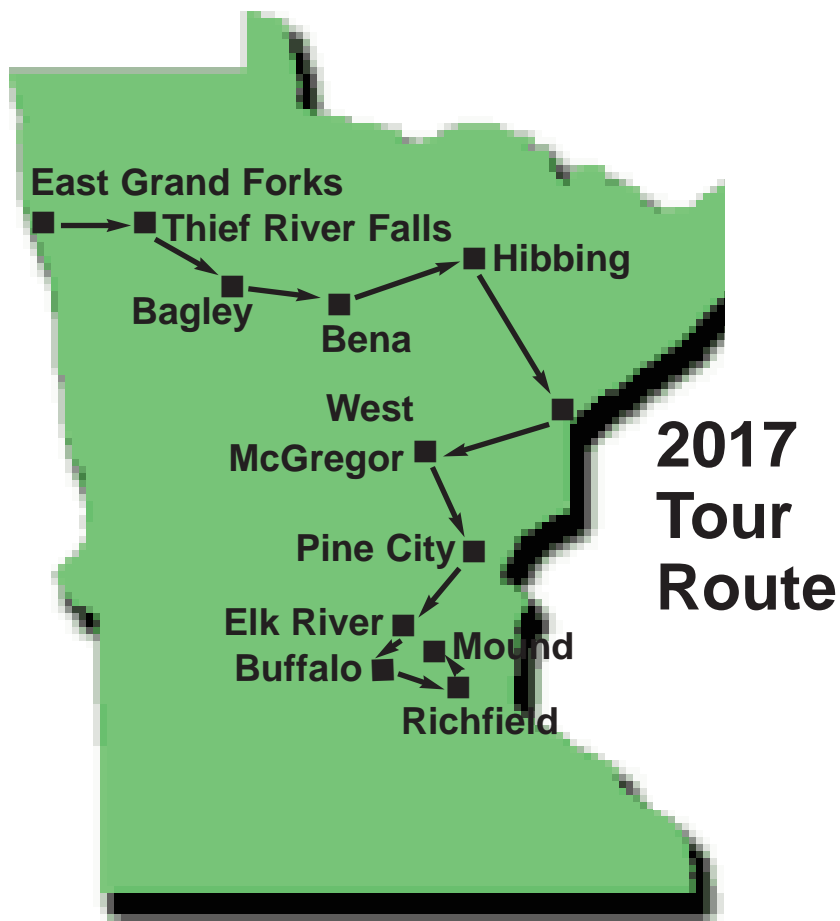
Dayton said he wanted art in the room that "more completely depicts our great state's varied history."

The governor was so upset at a prior meeting with the Capitol Preservation Commission, when it appeared that Republican leaders favored keeping the art, that he stomped out of the meeting just as it began.

After the MHS decision, he issued a one-sentence statement, "It's their decision to make and I accept their decision."

The six paintings were created by
Continued on Page 2





2017 Tour Route

Schmidt Tour does north swing

Continued from Page 1

Schmidt and his wife, Linda, live in Hines, Oregon, and have two daughters and six grandchildren.

Those who will be attending the events at the posts should make reservations with the post prior to the event. The complete list of contact people and phone numbers is on this page.

Any post that is at goal or all-time high at the time of the national commander's visit can have their photo taken with him and receive a special certificate. The photos will appear in the March issue of the Legionnaire.

Posts are encouraged to contact their local media about the visit and invite them to the tour stop. The national commander will do press interviews during the stops.

Two posts have announced information about the upcoming visit.

West Duluth Post 71 will feature a dinner including Swiss steak, oven-baked potatoes, vegetables, salad and roll and dessert. The cost will be \$12 per person. Reservations should be made by Feb. 1.

Buffalo Post 270 will feature an egg bake at a cost of \$8 per person at its breakfast on Feb. 9. Deadline for reservations is Feb. 5. Mail a check to Marilyn Miller, Unit 270 president, 404 Division St., Buffalo, MN 55413.

All contact information is in the adjacent box titled "2017 National Commander's Tour."

Schmidt will be accompanied by Department Commander Denise Milton, Department Membership Director Mark Dvorak, Department Adjutant Randy Tesdahl, and the commander's aide, Dirk Levy of Coos Bay, Oregon.

2017 National Commander's Tour

| Post | Event | Day | Contact: |
|---------------|------------------|--------|--|
| E. Gr. Forks | 8 a.m. breakfast | Feb. 6 | 701-213-1006, Terry |
| Th. Rv. Falls | noon lunch | Feb. 6 | 218-689-2707, Arlo |
| Bagley | 6 p.m. dinner | Feb. 6 | 218-209-8676, Dennis or 218-694-6125, Richard |
| Bena* | 8 a.m. breakfast | Feb. 7 | 218-760-0920, Patrick |
| Hibbing# | noon lunch | Feb. 7 | 218-263-5754, Bill |
| West Duluth | 6 p.m. dinner | Feb. 7 | 218-393-0079, Carl |
| McGregor | 8 a.m. breakfast | Feb. 8 | 218-426-4298, Andy |
| Pine City | noon lunch | Feb. 8 | 320-629-2021, Jack or Tammy |
| Elk River | 6 p.m. dinner | Feb. 8 | 763-441-3150 or 763-234-8400, Tom |
| Buffalo | 8 a.m. breakfast | Feb. 9 | 763-682-4796, Marilyn |
| Richfield | noon lunch | Feb. 9 | 612-915-0435, Post |
| Mound | 6 p.m. dinner | Feb. 9 | 952-472-9582, Kathy or 952-201-6918, Kathy's cell |

*The Bena breakfast will be at the Northern Lights Casino.

#The Hibbing meeting will be in the Memorial Building.

Copayments for VA outpatients change

The federal VA is amending its formula for veterans outpatient medications for non-service connected condition.

At the present time, the VA charges \$8 or \$9 each for 30-day supply of most drugs.

The new formula, which

will go into effect on Feb. 27, would eliminate that formula and create a new three-tier payment chart.

Tier 1 drugs, called preferred generics would be \$5 co-pay for a 30 day amount.

Tier II, non-preferred generics, would have an \$8 co-pay.

Tier III, or brand name drugs, would have an \$11 co-pay.

Co-payments would still end when a \$700 cap is reached each calendar year.

The change will mean a savings for veterans who are using preferred generics.

Capitol paintings

Continued from Page 1

artists who were nationally recognized at the turn of the 20th Century when the Capitol was built. One painting, in particular, Howard Pyle's "Battle of Nashville" is considered a masterpiece of Civil War art.

The paintings, which were removed for cleaning and restoration, will be reinstalled at the Capitol in the next few days.

Staffers at the MHS told those at the meeting that preservation was the major determinant in the process of deciding what to do with the paintings.

The Minnesota Capitol was considered at the time of its opening a memorial to the Civil War involvement of Minnesota veterans. There is large statuary honoring Minnesota Civil War generals in the Rotunda, and Civil War regimental flags were on display at the base of the rotunda.

The placement of the Civil War paintings in what Rep. Dean Urdahl, R-Grove City, called the "most important room in the most important building in the state" was very deliberate by architect Gilbert.

The Minnesota American Legion took a strong stance that the paintings should remain, honoring Minnesota's pioneer veterans for their role in the Civil War.

Randy Tesdahl, Department adjutant, thanked the council for its unanimous vote to restore the paintings to their place of honor.

Two other paintings in the rooms will be moved elsewhere. One painting showed Father Louis Hennepin, a French missionary and explorer, raising his cross, apparently naming St. Anthony Falls in what later became Minneapolis.

Hennepin is surrounded by another explorer and a group of Dakota people, including one bare-breasted woman toting a large pack. In actual fact, Hennepin had been captured by a Dakota war party and was brought to Minnesota by them.

The other painting showed the siege of New Ulm during the Dakota Uprising during the Civil War in Minnesota.

Both paintings have been judged to be offensive to the Dakota people. They will be shown elsewhere, perhaps at the Capitol, with what MHS Director Steve Elliot called "more robust interpretation."

The disappearance of the two paintings will leave two empty frames in the governor's outer offices. Rep. Alice Hausman, DFL-St. Paul, pointed out at the Capitol Preservation Commission meeting that no money has been appropriated to commission new paintings for those spots.

The Capitol will re-open

Timberwolves

Cont. from Page 1

Tickets must be purchased directly from the Timberwolves and buyers will have three price options:

- \$59, lower baseline seats.
- \$28, upper sideline seats.
- \$22, upper corner seats.

To order, go to timberwolves.com/groupoffers and use the promo code MNLegion.

All tickets are electronic and an email is necessary to claim the tickets.

You will need to bring them to the game on an electronic device such as a mobile phone. Tickets may not be resold.

All tickets must be

purchased by at least one day prior to the game.

They also may be purchased by calling Ellie Revenaugh at 612-673-8448 or by emailing Revenaugh at ellie.revenaugh@timberwolves.com.

The Wolves feature three players 21 years old who are averaging 20 points a game, Andrew Wiggins, Karl-Anthony Towns and Zach LaVine.



Medical pot OKed for PTSD

The Minnesota Department of Health has approved the use of medical marijuana for those suffering from PTSD.

The decision is expected to aid about 30,000 Minnesota veterans who have PTSD.

The change will take place in August of 2017. Patients will need advanced certification from a Minnesota health care provider.

Minnesota has one of the strictest medical pot laws.

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Endorsements

Klinkner endorsed for Dept. VC

Madelia Post 19 has endorsed Steven Klinkner for Department Vice Commander for the 2nd and 7th Districts for 2017-2018.

He served in the National Guard from 1969-1975.

He is a PUFL Legion member with 40 years of service.

Klinkner has served at his post as 1st & 2nd Vice Commander,

Commander, and Post Adjutant for 32 years, membership chairman for 30 years, Honor Guard for 40 years, and on the post finance committee. He presently is the Second District Judge Advocate, past District Commander 2010-2011 and past Department Chaplain 2014-2015.

Klinkner is a life-long member of Madelia Saint

Mary's Church and served on St. Mary's elementary school board. He also served on the Watonwan County Fair Board for 11 years and as a board of director on the Madelia Chamber of Commerce Board for 3 years.

Klinkner and his wife, Donna (auxiliary member), have been married 44 years and have two children and eight grandchildren.



STEVEN KLINKNER

Jim Peck named to ABCA council

Jim Peck, director of the junior program for Minnesota American Legion Baseball, has been named to the executive committee of the American Baseball Coaches Association. Peck is the first youth coach ever to be asked to serve on this committee.

He is a life member of the ABCA which has about 8,800 members. He is the only youth coach in their Hall of Fame (1998), and he serves also on their hall of fame committee.

"One of my goals is to have all youth baseball coaches have some sort of baseball and coaching courses from which they can become accredited.

"The big question is how do we get more kids to play baseball? The main issue here is travel ball and academy ball. The poor family's kid is now left out and plays another sport at eight years old," Peck said.

Shop, Ship and Share program gets national Legion spotlight

Editor's note: This story is used by permission from the National American Legion's website. It was written by the editor of the American Legion Magazine.

By Jeff Stoffer

Minnesota Army National Guard Sgt. 1st Class Dan Bronk remembers what it was like to be at a forward operating base in Afghanistan at Christmas. When the Chinook helicopters appeared on Dec. 24, 2011, he hoped that something good from home was onboard, something he could use, enjoy or bring a little color to an otherwise drab, dirty and dangerous place.

"It's not like you could just drive down the road to the store to get hand wipes," says Bronk, who serves today as 1st Vice Commander of American Legion Post 39 in St. Paul. "We were at a remote FOB on the top of a mountain."

That Christmas, he got more than hand wipes. Bronk and his fellow Minnesota troops received unexpected U.S. Postal Service boxes stuffed with gifts – from toiletries to socks to treats and games they could enjoy during the holidays and share with others. The boxes came from their Minnesota American Legion Family and the U.S. Postal Service, which have joined forces in a project called Shop, Ship and Share for the last nine years.

Lisa Sunderland, a U.S. Postal Service district staffing specialist, said that in its first year the program produced 73 boxes for Minnesota troops deployed far from home. This year, nearly 1,200 boxes were assembled and sent from Maplewood Mall near St. Paul to U.S. duty stations all over the world. Dozens of volunteers helped with the record-breaking 2016 effort Dec. 2-3, including American Legion Family members from across the region, National Guardsmen, students from nearly 40 schools, Boy Scout units, Junior ROTC cadets, an American Heritage Girls troop, and many others.

Volunteers at the packing tables ranged from 14-year-old Minnesota Junior American Legion Auxiliary member Kiana Coleman-Woods of Lino Lakes Unit 566 to 94-year-old Virginia Whaley, president of Auxiliary Unit 451 in St. Paul, and World War II B-24 tail gunner Bob Holmstrom, a member of American Legion Post 39 in St. Paul. Like many of the Legionnaires who volunteered for Shop, Ship and Share this year at the mall, Holmstrom – who helped fly supplies to American soldiers fighting in the Battle of the Bulge around Christmas 1944 – remembers what it was like to be a young soldier far from home during the holidays. "Been there and done that," he said.

"Been there, done that, too – Desert Storm," added volunteer Bob Leslie, American Legion Riders Chapter President for Arcade-Phalen Post 577. "When they open that box, it's a piece of home. Hopefully, they will get the message that we have not forgotten about them."

The idea sprang from a U.S. Postal Service initiative to open a retail outlet in the Maplewood Mall to ease shipping for holiday shoppers. Sunderland said her co-worker, Steve Campos, a National Guardsman at the time and a member of American Legion Post 599 in St. Paul, suggested adding a troop-support element to the satellite post office in the mall. Because the U.S. Postal Service has restrictions about collecting donated items or raising funds, Campos suggested The American Legion's 4th District of Minnesota step in to assist. Thus was born Shop, Ship and Share as a joint effort between The American Legion and the U.S. Postal Service.

With 45 days to go before the first event in 2008, Teresa Ash, 4th District commander at the time, went to American Legion Family members with a challenge she was not sure could be met. "I said I'd like to raise \$5,000 for this," said Ash, the Legion's Shop, Ship and Share committee chairperson today. "Not only did that happen – they doubled it. This is what The American Legion is all about. People want to be a part of this."

The American Legion's "Fighting 5th District" later locked arms in the effort, and donations from throughout the state began to pour in, as well as the names of deployed personnel to receive the packages overseas.

"We do pull in the whole department," said Robin



Dozens of volunteers at the Maplewood Mall, mainly from the Fourth and Fifth Districts packed hundreds of boxes of goodies for troops overseas during the holidays. It is the ninth year of the program.

Picray, 4th District finance officer. "Those of us who have been in the service know what it's like to be away from home during the holidays."

"Their hearts are all in it – to do anything they can for those who are deployed," Sunderland said of the Legion Family volunteers. "It's outstanding how much this has grown."

One volunteer, Mickey Ostrum of Post 39 in St. Paul, said he thinks Shop, Ship and Share can grow beyond Minnesota's borders. "Hopefully, it will spread to other areas around the country. If we can do it here, there is no reason other departments in The American Legion can't do it. There are plenty of troops overseas."

Lisa Ghylin of Post 599 in St. Paul spent two Christmas holidays deployed in Afghanistan. After discharge, she learned about Shop, Ship and Share through her student veterans association at Metropolitan State University, whose members volunteered to help with the effort one year. "I've been interested in (Shop, Ship and Share) since before I became a Legion member," said Ghylin, an Army veteran who promoted the event in her Legion cap Dec. 2 in a live in-studio Twin Cities morning TV news program. "It did spur my membership in The American Legion."

As adults filled out packing slips and boxed items for distribution, children wrote notes, drew and colored Christmas greetings for the deployed personnel. "We came here so we could help veterans," said 15-year-old Emily Schlegel, whose American Heritage Girls troop is sponsored by Maple Grove American Legion Post 172. "We're glad these pictures are going to the men and women who are serving in Iraq and Afghanistan."

"They fought for our freedom, so I want to give back," said Kiana Coleman-Woods, 14, the department's American Legion Auxiliary honorary junior president. "I want them to know that somebody is looking out for them."

Ghylin said she volunteers at Shop, Ship and Share because the men and women deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan are always on her mind. "I think about them every day, knowing what I did and what I went through. It sucks to be away so long and so far away from the comforts of home at the holidays."

Ash, whose son was deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan and received boxes from the American Legion-USPS effort, said the best part of Shop, Ship and Share is feedback from the front. "We get pictures, and to see their faces, it's just

Facts about the Shop, Ship and Share program

-- The program began in 2008 as a partnership between the U.S. Postal Service and the Fourth District.

-- It was held this year at the Maplewood Mall.

-- Volunteers from across the state gather to pack boxes to send to troops overseas.

-- This year set several records for the two-day program:

Most volunteers: 150 plus.

Most boxes sent to troops: nearly 1,200

Most fundraising: Over \$60,000.

awesome," she said. "I can't tell you how rewarding it is. And every single person here (among the volunteers) plays an equally important role. This event brings people together."

Special guest volunteers and visitors at the mall Dec. 2-3 included two Minnesota Vikings cheerleaders, "Goldy" the Gopher (the University of Minnesota mascot) and the T.C. Bear (the Minnesota Twins mascot).

Minnesota American Legion Department Commander Denise Milton, who spent 30 years in the U.S. Army, including overseas assignments as a nurse, knows what it means to get a something special during the holidays when you're stationed far away. "I can't tell you how important it is to get mail or a package," she told the crowd. "Often, that's the only life line you have from home."

U.S. Army National Guard Col. (ret.) Eric Ahlness was the featured speaker at a program near the end of this year's event. He was at the same FOB on the mountaintop as Sgt. 1st Class Bronk in 2011. "Having care packages from home meant the world to me," he told a crowd that included the local mayor, a county commissioner, the city police commander and several American Legion and U.S. Postal Service officials. "That made our day... gave us a little brightness that we wouldn't otherwise have. It brings brightness. It brings cheer."

COMMANDER'S COLUMN

By Denise Milton



Happy New Year Fellow Legionnaires.

I hope that you all had a blessed Christmas. My daughter and son-in-law came home from Germany for the holidays, but due to time and travel constraints they each visited their respective families. I love them both dearly for sacrificing their Christmas together for us. Thank you. I wish to thank all of those who extended well wishes and hospitality to myself and Dennis this past month.

Most of us have made a resolution or two to improve our own lives. I challenge you to extend that same resolve to your local post, district and/or department. What is it that needs a little work? Incorporate the goals of the Five-year Strategic Plan into your wishes for a better Legion. It all happens at the grassroots level -- your post.

I know of two districts that have scheduled revitalizations for this month and a handful of posts that are doing them as well. These can be very successful if well prepared for. If you are hesitant in having a revitalization due to lack of knowledge, do not worry because we have a well-trained membership team here in Minnesota. The national headquarters will send you lists and will also do advance public notification which includes personal notifications in the form of post cards and PSA's in your community and surrounding area. Pick a date (1-3 days) at least a month in advance. It can be done and the success that we have experienced over the last five years has been fantastic.

Membership Director Mark Dvorak and I would like to see more "Open House" style revitalizations at the post level. Invite the veterans and their families to your local post home and show them what we are, what we do and what they are missing out on. Make it an American Legion

Mail Call

Zero Tolerance

To the Editor:

I just saw a post on Facebook saying that Minnesota American Legion Baseball will have a zero toleration policy for disrespecting the National Anthem. I hope that this is true. Your organization may take some heat for taking this stand but there are far more people willing to support it.

Thank you.

Brad Koenig
Hector

Christmas Fiction

To the Editor:

I wanted to take a moment to respond to the Christmas Fiction "The sergeant and the lieutenant share a Christmas Eve" story published in the December 2016 *Legionnaire*.

Thank you for writing and sharing this story. You have written many fine stories and articles over the years; but this one really was excellent. While reading, I visualized The sergeant Butch and the lieutenant Kate on a movie screen in a theater.

This Christmas Season, I will be sharing your story about Kate and Butch with family and friends.

Keep up the fine work good sir.

A very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to you and your team.

BMCS Paul A. Schloesser, USCG / USCGR (retired)
Lino Lakes

Christmas Story

To the Editor:

I enjoyed your Christmas war story. If it were possible to send it along to your old newspaper friend Phil Duff, I would. One comment regarding your story: "You should write more."

Jim Edlund

No procrastination

To the Editor:

I just read your Christmas story. It was terrific. Though it was fiction, you had the ability to make it so believable.

I'll be 90 in a couple weeks and one of my problems of age is procrastination. My present attitude is that normally I'd say I'll have to write Al about that tomorrow. I might never have done it. So that's why you're getting a fast email. And a very Merry Christmas to you and yours.

Neal Lano
Grand Rapids

Family affair. In other words, include the Auxiliary, SAL, Riders and Juniors. What better way to let your community know what we are all about.

District Mid-Winter Conferences have all been prepared and scheduled for the next two months. Take time to attend as they are almost all one-day events. This is the time that you can obtain information and updates on all the programs of The American Legion. I am asking that at least one member from each post attend the conference in their respective districts. Remember that it is an excellent way to get a review of each program and it is your opportunity to ask that "one" question you have been waiting to ask.

Many of the program applications have been mailed out in the past one to two months and of course are subject to deadlines. As for the consolidated post report (CPR), let's make an effort to get them completed and make that 100% target by July 2017. I promised National Commander Schmidt that our department would be walking across the stage to accept the certificate at the National Convention. I'm proud of Minnesota and our Legion Family -- Let's do it.

We have so many programs here in the Department of Minnesota that no other department has like Legionville (School Safety Patrol Camp), American Legion Family Hospital Association (a portion of your dues goes to this in addition to many donations from throughout the state.) I am so proud of this program as every Legion Family member is eligible for monetary assistance to be used for paying medical bills. Let's not forget the Outstanding Enlisted Service Member of the Year. We have no active duty post or bases in our state, however, several Guard and Reserve units that been activated several times during this long war.

I recently attended a National Convention Corporation meeting in preparation of our hosting this event in 2018. This will mark the 100th annual convention of The American Legion. We hosted the 1st convention and the same will be true for the 100th convention. I am asking every post to do their part by registering your post on the Centennial Celebration website: centennial.legion.org. We have 52 out of 547 posts registered so far which is not many. However, it is a start. I am asking District Commanders to promote the registration at your respective mid-winters. Further updates will be available in the upcoming months.

I wish you all safe travels in the coming weeks as you attend various Legion activities.

For God and Country,

Honor Guard stipend

To the Editor:

I finally received correspondence as to why we weren't receiving stipend performing at military. I have sent in form 1164 for the past 2 years and have sent memos asking why we weren't receiving stipend. Apparently we aren't professional enough to perform this family request. We were asked to apply for a cage code number and we did so. We receive stipend for three years and then it stopped with no explanation. The thing the Military doesn't understand that we are normally providing this service for comrades and family members of people we know personally. The instructions say that they provide not just the \$50.00, but also transportation, meals and what ever else is necessary to transport National Guard personnel to the funeral location. I have witnessed two cases where the National Guard has performed this service and am not impressed over and above what our Honor Guard does. We have received many comments from family members how professional we are. It seems to me that at a time such as this our main objective is to make the family as much at ease as possible and it is our duty to fulfill this need. Our Honor Guard members console family members and spend time with all family members and friends. I have Yet to see the National Guard members make an effort to do this. Our country gets so wrapped up in Political Correctness that we forget creating a warm atmosphere at a critical time such as this.

Harold Jackson, Honor Guard Coordinator
Gaylord

Winnie Smith

To the Editor:

Having read a sizable stack of books about the Vietnam war, *American Daughter Gone to War* by Winnie Smith was the first one relating to what it was like being an Army nurse in country. For those of you that were under the care of these angels in white (or camo), it will answer some questions that have gone unanswered for a long time. If you think PTSD is strictly a frontline issue, you would be wrong. Be prepared, as this will bring nightmares back for some. This book fills a pretty big hole in the story of this "conflict." I guarantee that this is a book that you will never forget. Amazon carries the paperback reprint for under \$20. I was fortunate to stumble on a first edition hard copy at a bargain, not knowing that the price is just over \$400 currently on the same site. If you read it, or have read it, please let me know what your thoughts are.

Randy Koivisto
North Branch

Chaplain's Corner

By
Bill Brockberg



Where Am I? Look Up!

I hope everyone had a happy holiday last month and were able to share in the festivities with family and friends. I made the most of the season as best I could, but I did run into a problem. I fell victim to a computer scam and although I didn't lose any money, the scammers locked me out of my system and I lost all access to home email, internet and every document ever saved to my hard drive. As a result of my computer science naiveté I did not get holiday greetings sent out. I couldn't email a holiday greeting and for those friends and family members who usually get letters from me in early December, that didn't happen either. Two of my siblings asked, "why not just send Christmas cards without your usual "letter" enclosed?" Because I was so focused on not being able to get on my home computer, I lost valuable time making a connection and extending holiday greetings and wishes to those most dear. I forgot where I was socially and spiritually, what I needed to do, and when my correspondence needed to get done.

A friend of mine told me of a story last month after Minnesota got its first major snow and cold blast of the season of what happened on one of his weekly exercise routines. It was a bitterly cold and windy Sunday morning and he said he had half-a-mind to take a quick three-mile run.

"With that 'half a mind,' I dressed, stepped out the door and took off on my jog," said my friend.

"A mile and a half from home, my left knee buckled and I fell to the ground. After cinching my hood as tightly as I could, I put my head down against the wind and tried to walk home. Every step was extremely painful, but after what seemed like an eternity, I finally limped to my front door."

The next week when my friend told of his experience to one of his friends, he said, "Yeah, I drove by you that morning and saw you walking. I would have given you a ride home, but you didn't look up."

None of us probably needs reminding that life can be pretty painful at times. Suddenly and without warning, circumstances or situations can bring us to our knees. Like my friend, it could be that you are limping through a painful experience these days. Have you looked up lately? God asks, "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" (Genesis 18:14)

The answer to that question is a resounding "No!" There isn't anything too hard for God to accomplish in your life or mine. We simply have to get our eyes off of our situation and our pain and look up and realize that God is right there waiting to help. There is a good four-letter word to keep in mind: PRAY. God invites us to ask him to do what only he can do.

Last month, I needed to look up from my computer. And then, I needed to pray for inspiration to finish my holiday greetings. When reaching out to fellow Legionnaires, fellow veterans and friends in our communities, we can look up, we can seek and find a heavenly father in whom all things are possible. By God's grace, we can see where we are and we can be leaders and friends to fellow veterans and make those fellow veterans—fellow Legionnaires. We can look up from our computers and serve as community leaders, veterans' advocates, sponsors to programs for children and youth and friends to all in our communities.

The Minnesota Legionnaire

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Al Zdon, Editor

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What's Happening

Drop In Legal Clinics

The Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans has announced a series of free Drop-in Legal Clinics in Minnesota.

The clinics cover such topics as housing, employment, benefits, expungement, wills, debt collection, and family law including child support.

Those available to help veterans include attorneys, MACV staff, county veteran service officers, and child support officers.

The clinics include:

-- Minneapolis VA Medical Center, Tuesday, Jan. 10, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. in the Flag Atrium Balcony Room 25. There is free parking. The Fredrickson & Byron P.A. law firm is co-sponsoring this clinic.

-- The Depot in Duluth on Michigan Street, Thursday, Jan. 5, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m..

-- St. Cloud VA Medical Center, Auditorium, Building 8, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

History Round Tables

The St. Croix Valley Civil War Roundtable will meet on Monday, Jan. 23, at the Lowell Inn. The subject is "The Lincoln/ Bixby Letters Controversy," with speaker Ray Marshall.

This is a dinner meeting. Reservations should be made through Steve Anderson, 715-386-1268. The dinner is \$22. There's a social hour at 5:30, dinner at 6 and program at 7 p.m.

The World War II History Round Table at the Historic Fort Snelling Visitor Center, will be held on Thursday, Jan. 12. The subject will be the "Battle of Koenigsberg" with

author Dennis Showalter. There will be veterans of the Eastern Front on hand to discuss this often overlooked struggle by the Russians.

Admission is \$5.

Milton Testimonial

The Testimonial Dinner for Department Commander Denise Milton will be held at Shooting Star Hotel and Event Center in Mahanomen on Saturday, May 6.

The featured speaker for the event will be John Brieden, Past National Commander from Texas.

The casino does have a group of rooms blocked out for the event. If you contact the casino, ask for Hotel Group Code 3729.

There will be more information in the February issue of the *Legionnaire*.

Hastings Family Events

A partnership of veterans and civic groups, including the American Legion Post 47 has announced a slate of family-focused events for the coming year. The events include a free basketball game, a family table talk, health table talk, a heroes skate and Hasting Veterans Home Community Service Support.

For more information, contact Dean Markuson, 651-438-2208 or email deanrvnvet@aol.com.

Fishing Derby

The annual First and Third District's Fishing Derby will be held on Saturday, Jan. 21. Contestants will meet at the Waseca Post 228, 700 State Street South, Waseca, 56093 and leave at 10 a.m. for the lake. The derby usually lasts for

about two hours. There will be awards, food and refreshments after the derby back at the post.

AmazonSmile

People can make donations to The American Legion now while shopping on Amazon. American Legion Charities is now one of the charities available to donate to through AmazonSmile. (smile.amazon.com)

When a person shops on AmazonSmile, you'll find the same prices, a huge selection and the same shopping experience as Amazon.com, but you can also donate a portion of the purchase price to a charity, such as American Legion Charities.

Amazon will donate .5 percent of the purchase price to the charity you select.

Family Support Network

The Family Support Network was created in 1990 to aid military families if they were experiencing problems while a loved one was deployed. The request for help would go through a local post, and it might include car repair, snow shoveling, emergency help, or connecting a family with the right government or private agency.

Since that time, the program has faded away, but many times the need for help is still there. But often reserve or Guard units don't even know about it.

Posts are urged to contact their local Guard or reserve unit in person and introduce yourselves. Let them know that the post and its members can be a resource for families with deployed members. More information on the Family Support Network can be obtained at www.legion.org/family-support.

Taps

Berg, Harold S., 89, veteran of World War II, died Dec. 10, 2016. He was Third District Commander in 1978-79, Department Membership Director in 1979-80, and Department Vice Commander in 1981-82. He was a past commander of Hastings Post 47.

Nagorske, Herbert A., 84, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Nov. 5, 2016. He was Second District commander from 1992-93 and Department Vice Commander from 1999-2000. He was a member of Windom Post 206.

Salmonson, Merlin, 71, Navy veteran of the Vietnam War, died Nov. 28, 2016. He was a member of Mora Post 201.

Ihrke, Donald Herman, 90, Army veteran of World War II, died Nov. 19, 2016. He was a member of Eyota Post 551.

Haben, Harold W., 87, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Dec. 10, 2016. He was a member of New Richland Post 75.

Donovan, Thomas H., 90, Army veteran of World War II, died Nov. 24, 2016. He was a clerk at general headquarters in Manila, Tokyo and Yokohama. He was a member of New Richland Post 75.

Anderson, Kenneth L. 94, veteran of World War II, died Dec. 10, 2016. He was a member of Bayport Post 491.

Wood, Dennis C., 56, Marine Corps veteran of the Lebanon/ Grenada war era, died Nov. 15, 2016. He was a member of Golden Valley Post 523.

Stellmach, Norbert, 90, Navy veteran of World War II, died Dec. 16, 2016. He was a member of Sauk Rapids Post 254.

Shannon, Edward W., 89, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Dec. 12, 2016. He was a member of Albert Lea Post 56.

Phillips, Rudolph J., 95, Marine Corps veteran of World War II, died Nov. 13, 2016. He was a member of Albert Lea Post 56.

Smith, Gerald L., 92, Marine Corps veteran of World War II, died Dec. 4, 2016. He was a member of Albert Lea Post 56.

Annonson, Allen, 84, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Nov. 4, 2016. He was a military policeman. He was a member of Pinewood Post 438.

Larson, Peter M., 67, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Dec. 10, 2016. He served in Germany, and later was in the Air Guard for 20 years. He was a member of Cloquet Post 262.

Schroeder, Norbert, 79, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Nov. 16, 2016. He was a member of Caledonia Post 191.

Osmonson, Duane O., 85, Army veteran of the Korean and Vietnam Wars, died Nov. 27, 2016. He served on active duty for 21 years. He was a member of Austin Post 91.

Wedner, Joyce W., 89, Army veteran of World War II, died Nov. 2, 2016. He was a member of Willmar Post 167.

Zwart, Fred R., 80, Army National Guard veteran of the

Korean War, died Dec. 15, 2016. He was a member of Willmar Post 167.

Balfany, Chauney, 85, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Dec. 11, 2016. He was a member of Granite Falls Post 69.

Forrest, Edward "Buster," 83, Marine Corps veteran of the Korean War, died Nov. 17, 2016. He served in Korea and earned three battle stars. He was a past commander of Anoka Post 102.

Lorang, Marvin Nicholas, 79, Air Force veteran of the Vietnam War, died Nov. 11, 2016. He was a member of Lismore Post 636.

Castledine, Charles "Doc" Oliver, 95, Army Air Corps veteran of World War II, died Nov. 6, 2016. He was a member of Windom Post 206.

Lahti, John Edward, 95, Army veteran of World War II, died Nov. 19, 2016. He was a Tec 5 serving as a combat engineer in the First Armored Division and fought in eight major battles and made three amphibious assaults. He was a member of Barnum Post 415.

Stark, Herman Henry G., 93, Army veteran of World War II, died Nov. 9, 2016. He was a military policeman and served at Fort Knox and Fort Ord. He was a past commander of Glencoe Post 95.

Stark, Marvin Milton, 91, Army veteran of World War II, died Nov. 9, 2016. He served in the Philippines. He was a member of Gibbon Post 226.

(The Starks were brothers who died within an hour of each other.)

Knutson, Harley, 84, Air Force veteran of the Korean War, died Nov. 17, 2016. He served in Germany as an aircraft mechanic. He was a member of Thief River Falls Post 117.

Blaisdell, William, 79, Navy veteran of the Korean War, died Dec. 6, 2016. He was a past adjutant of Hillman Post 602.

Jabs, Raymond F., 98, Army veteran of World War II, died Nov. 26, 2016. He served in the southwest Pacific, the United States and Canada. He earned two battle stars. He was a member of Jordan Post 3.

Erlandson, Dr. Charles Warren, 85 Navy veteran of the Korean War, died Nov. 28, 2016. He served in the U.S. Dental Corps in San Francisco and Guam. He stayed in the reserves and retired in 1991 as a commander. He was a member of Monticello Post 260.

Kirk, Donald, 91, Army Air Corps veteran of World War II, died Nov. 15, 2016. He was a P-47 pilot and flew 97 missions in Europe during the war. He was a first lieutenant and earned the Distinguished Flying Cross and several Air Medals. He was a member of Blue Earth Post 89.

Warnberg, Howard, 92, Navy veteran of World War II, died Dec. 8, 2016. He later served in the Naval Reserve. He was a member of Little Falls Post 46.

Olson, Milton O., 67, Army National Guard veteran of the Vietnam War, died Dec. 6, 2016. He was a member of Keewatin Post 452.

Asklund, Orrin I., 88, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Nov. 28, 2016. He was a member of North Branch Post

85.

Lenarz, Robert, 73, Army veteran of the Vietnam War, died Nov. 2, 2016. He was a member of St. Augusta Post 621.

Laudenbach, Harvey, 89, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Dec. 3, 2016. He was a member of St. Augusta Post 621.

Zylla, Sylvester Joseph, 89, Army Air Corps veteran of World War II, died Nov. 17, 2016. He worked on the Manhattan Project. He later joined the Air Force and served 22 years on active and reserve duty. He retired as a master sergeant. He was a member of St. Cloud Post 76.

Blindt, Vernon "Bud," 92, Army veteran of World War II, died Dec. 7, 2016. He was a member of Granite Falls Post 69.

Doll, Thomas Andrew, 71, Navy veteran of the Vietnam War, died Nov. 28, 2016. He served in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. He was a member of Wheaton Post 80.

Forcier, Donald H., 85, Navy veteran of the Korean War, died Dec. 12, 2016. He served in Japan. He was a member of Wheaton Post 80.

Backman, Edward M., 88, Air Force veteran of the Korean War, died Nov. 27, 2016. He was a member of Hoffman Post 93.

Dahl, LeRoy, 82, Marine Corps veteran of the Korean War, died Nov. 24, 2016. He served in Marine aviation. He was a post commander of Brainerd Post 255.

Bauler, James Matthew, 85, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Dec. 10, 2016. He was a past commander of Madison Post 158.

Correction

Meyer, Arnold, 98, Army veteran of World War II, died Oct. 2, 2016. He was a corporal. He was a member of Wells Post 210.

Obituary Policy

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

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

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

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

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

Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

By
Jeremy Wolfsteller



Combat-Injured Veterans

Serving the country in the Armed Forces is one of the most honorable things a person can do. It is a choice someone makes that is much greater than oneself. Selflessness, loyalty and duty are just a few characteristics needed to commit such a great task. In a time of war, service-members are called to serve in foreign countries to protect the freedoms and liberties we have at home. Like any war, service-members come home with injuries, both physically and mentally. These injuries can lead to a medical separation through the Department of Defense because they can no longer perform their duties. The process the Department of Defense uses for a medical separation is called the Integrated Disability Evaluation System. Both the Veterans Health Administration and Department of Defense evaluate the service member. While DOD focuses only on the unfit for duty conditions, the VA looks at every medical condition caused by the service. The "key percentage" is anything 30% and over by DOD for unfit conditions to get a retirement. If their rating for unfit conditions is 20% or less, a service-member receives a "medical separation" and possible severance pay.

Let's focus on the medical separations and severance payments. Since January 17, 1991 the Department Finance and Accounting System (DFAS) through DOD has been taxing service-members severance payments for injuries related to combat service. Under federal law, veterans who suffer combat related injuries and who are separated from the military are not supposed to be taxed. These actions were recently identified by National Veterans Legal Service Program (NVLSP) and followed up with legislation that would repay this handful of veterans who were wrongfully taxed. December 16, 2016 President Obama signed into law The Combat-Injured Veterans Tax Fairness Act of 2016. Approximately \$78 million dollars were wrongfully withheld from thousands of disabled combat veterans, approx. 13,800.

The Department of Defense is now tasked with identifying certain severance payments to veterans with combat-related injuries paid after January 17, 1991, from which DOD withheld amounts for tax purposes, and identify the individuals to whom such severance payments were made. DOD shall provide each such veteran with notice of the amount of improperly withheld severance payments, and instructions for filing amended tax returns to recover such amount.

The period for filing a related claim with the Internal Revenue Service for a credit or refund is extended beyond the three year limitation to the date that is one year after DOD provides the veteran with the information required by the Act.

jwolfsteller@mnlegion.org

Legion cited as top resource for jobs

An annual survey of veterans and employers shows The American Legion is one of the top resources for veterans looking for work or resources in their job search.

The annual Veteran Talent Index (VTI) was established in 2011 by Monster and Military.com to help transitioning servicemembers get a better grasp of the employment landscape.

"The VTI was initially created to provide information on why veterans, specifically, post-9/11 veterans, faced a higher unemployment rate. The VTI also provided research and information around what the barriers were to connecting veteran job seekers with employers eager to hire them." As noted in this year's VTI, "In 2011, the unemployment rate for post-9/11 veterans was 12.1 percent, much higher than the 8.7 percent of non-veterans. Companies wanted to hire veterans but didn't know where to find them and many veterans expressed frustration at the difficulty in finding veteran-friendly employers. The result was a concerted effort and partnership among the public, private and non-profit sectors to work together to help lower the unemployment rate and connect job seekers with employers eager to hire them."

This year's survey asked job seekers and employers about their use or partnerships with nonprofits and veterans service organizations. Twenty-one percent of veterans responding to the survey said they use The American Legion for resources in their job search, compared to 26 percent using the Department of Veterans Affairs and 21 percent using the Department of Labor.

A listing of career fairs can be found on the Legion website at <https://www.legion.org/careers/jobfairs>, and job search advice and other career information can be found at <https://www.legion.org/careers>.

Lenorud retires as St. Cloud VA rep

Gerald Lenorud, longtime hospital rep for The American Legion at the St. Cloud VA Medical Center, has retired.

"Gerald's leadership and love for his fellow veterans will be greatly missed," Department Adjutant Randy Tesdahl said.

"He was a fixture at St. Cloud, and had many friends. He helped many veterans through the years."

Lenorud said, "I had a small army of veterans who would call on me. Some just liked to talk. But Jerry is gone. Sorry, guys."

Lenorud wanted to pay special tribute to Jackie Stevenson on the St. Cloud VAMC staff for her support through the years.

Lenorud's position will not be filled.

Planning for 2018 ramping up in state

Continued from Page 1

— The Minnesota Boys Choir has agreed to perform at the memorial service.

— The 34th Division Band will participate in events during the convention.

— An effort will be made to get proclamations from Federal, state and local governments about the 100th convention. Those proclamations may be put on display.

— A special historical booklet, "Beginning the Second Century of Service" will be distributed to all delegates.

— Shuttle buses from the hotels to the convention and other events.

Ludwig noted that the last convention in Minneapolis in 2011 went pretty much unnoticed by the rest of the state. He wants the 2018 convention to make an impact.

"We have to involve the Twin City media and let them know that the 100th national convention of this organization is newsworthy."

He said the Legion should involve schools around the state leading up to the convention.

Minnesota is also moving ahead to encourage posts to do their post history to co-incide with the 100th anniversary. And posts and communities are encouraged to list their war or veterans memorials with the national organization. Those who want to enter a local memorial can go to www.legion.org/memorials and follow the instructions. It can be done from a cell phone.

When World War I ended in Europe and the troops began coming home, they wanted to form an organization that would preserve their comradeship and allow them to be of service to their nation.

A caucus was held in Paris, and a second caucus was held in St. Louis, all in preparation for the first convention in Minneapolis. It was held at the old Minneapolis Convention Center, where Orchestra Hall and Peavey Plaza now stand.

The convention was held around the Nov. 11 Armistice Day, and a parade drew tens of thousands of watchers in downtown Minneapolis. Unfortunately, snowy and cold weather greeted the delegates and may have had an effect on a final vote on where to establish Legion headquarters. Indianapolis beat out Minneapolis.

Many major accomplishments happened at that first convention, including the creating of the Legion's preamble, and the establishment of the Auxiliary.

The Legion was much ahead of its time in determining that all veterans no matter their color, religion, sex or previous rank, were welcome as members. All were equal.

After the 100th convention in Minneapolis, the celebration will shift to Indianapolis for the 101st convention and the marking of the 100th birthday of the organization.

The honorary chairs for the Minneapolis convention includes Bud Grant and Department of Veterans Affairs Commissioner Larry Shellito.

MOH honorees at inaugural

The American Legion and the Veterans Inaugural Committee will pay tribute to 42 Medal of Honor recipients and newly sworn in President Donald Trump during the Veterans Inaugural Ball - Salute to Heroes on Jan. 20.

The longest-running veterans inaugural ball will feature a special performance by Rascal Flatts lead vocalist Gary LeVox, who will be joined by songwriters Neil Thrasher and Wendell Mobley, presented by Songs for Sound.

"The Price is Right" host and comedian Drew Carey, who served in the Marine Corps Reserves, will emcee the event at the Renaissance Washington D.C. Downtown Hotel. The Veterans Inaugural Ball - Salute to Heroes began at the request of President Dwight D. Eisenhower. It has provided an opportunity for the newly sworn in commander in chief to personally pay tribute to Medal of Honor recipients as part of every inauguration since 1953.

Sons of The American Legion

By
Gene Olsword



I want to welcome the American Legion Family to 2017.

I am sure even with the cold frigid temperatures we had and the snow, you all had a great Christmas with family and friends and bringing 2017 in in the proper manner. With the holiday season behind us, it is time to settle back in the saddle and our noses to the grindstone and finish the work we started last July.

If you didn't already know, a Sons squadron in your post is the best thing that could ever happen to a Post Home. Due to the increasing decline in American Legion memberships through deaths from the WWII era veterans and now the Korean War era veterans, many posts in this nation including Minnesota are finding it harder to maintain honor and color guards as well as other community functions you have been involved in. Also being affected is the financial area where it is becoming harder and harder to keep the front door open and paying all the bills plus supporting all the programs that the American Legion is involved in. With a Sons of The American Legion squadron in these posts, the slack can be taken up by this squadron and be a great asset to the post and community. It only takes ten (10) individuals-- legion members or otherwise to start a squadron and put new life within your post. If I am speaking of your post, have your post commander or adjutant to please contact our department office and ask for more information on starting a squadron in your post. You can also contact me either by email manofgrs@hotmail.com or by phone (507) 273-3500 and I will be more than willing to have an officer of our Detachment visit your post and explain it further and answer all questions.

To all The American Legion Family, let's have a prosperous 2017 year.

Keep in your hearts and prayers all our active duty personnel who continue to be in harm's way for their safe return home.

Fundraising for the Centennial underway

Continued from Page 1

ing the Minnesota convention a memorable one for the 10,000 who will come to Minneapolis in 2018. Or they can check off a donation to the Foundation for use in Legion programs.

"The Davys have been at this a long time, and they know what they are doing," Past National Commander Dan Ludwig said.

Ludwig is hopeful that in addition to Minnesota companies, that posts and individuals will also contribute. "All are invited to make a contribution as their means dictate or allow. They have been supporting this organization for over 98 years."

Legion programs that could benefit from a donation include Boys State, Baseball, outdoor disabled veteran events, Oratorical, Legacy Scholarship, and hospitalized veterans.

Those giving to the convention will contribute toward shuttle buses for visitors, badges for delegates, World War I re-enactors, and possibly a post-parade party, Olson said.

Donors can give a lump sum or a monthly commitment.

Donors can give in a variety of ways. Corporations and businesses are encouraged to sponsor the convention, and, depending on their level of commitment can receive a variety of benefits including advertising in the Minnesota Legionnaire newspaper, a listing in a special convention historical booklet, and brand posting on convention banners and on the Department website.

Posts who want to contribute can also get advertising space in the Legionnaire, a listing in the historic booklet, and post recognition on banners and on the website.

Posts and corporations can simply purchase space in the Legionnaire and a portion will go to the newspaper and a portion will go to the convention or Foundation. A full page for posts is \$4,000, half page is \$2,000 and quarter page is \$1,000. Each of these purchases also provides a quarter page in the historical booklet. For corporations, a full page is \$5,000, a half page is \$3,000 and a quarter page is \$1,500.

For more information, contact Michael Davy at 612-247-9960 or mdavy@mnlegion.org or by going on the Department website.

The Department is also seeking names of corporations and businesses around the state that may be possible donors to the convention and Legion programs.

"There are many veteran-orientated or veteran-sympathetic businesses who might be willing to contribute," Olson said.



National Magazine Editor Jeff Stoffer was the featured speaker at the Pearl Harbor Rally.

Pearl Harbor Rally at Waite Park



Glenn Mueller, the commander of St. Charles Post 190, presented Department Commander Denise Milton with two duffle bags and two boxes of comfort items for homeless veterans. The commander's project this year is to gather such items and distribute them through the Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans.



MARK DVORAK
Legion Membership Director



CLIFF TIEGLUND
SAL Membership Director



ZANDRA KESSLER
Auxiliary Membership Chair

The Pearl Harbor Rally held in December at the Waite Park Post 428 featured as the main speaker the Marketing, Media and Communications Director for the national American Legion Jeff Stoffer.

Stoffer, who is also the editor of The American Legion Magazine, first spoke on the significance of the 75th anniversary of Pearl Harbor, and the beginning of World War II.

"That was a war that shaped everyone of us," Stoffer told the 200 or so ralliers. "Sixty million lives were lost around the world."

He noted that the war ended with the use of the atomic bomb. "The A-bomb proved that we have the power at our fingertips to end civilization as we know it. Albert Einstein said, 'I know not how World War III will be fought, but World War IV will be fought with sticks and stones.'"

Stoffer said the GI Bill, which emerged from World War II with Legion sponsorship, sent eight million GIs into higher education and changed the world.

Stoffer then shifted gears and described how he wrote a book and documentary film, *Mother of Normandy, The Story of Simone Renaud*.

Renaud was from St. Mere Eglise, a town in Normandy where 15,000 American soldiers were buried following the D-Day invasion in 1944.

She spent 40 years writing letters to the families of soldiers who were buried there.

Stoffer said that the American sacrifice for France is so highly thought of in St. Mere Eglise that on D-Day each year the American Flag is flown above the French flag.

The results of the rally included: District 1 at 74.21 percent was in first place for the Auxiliary following the turn-in at the rally.

The Fifth District with 75.07 percent led the way for the Sons of the American Legion.

The Third District was first in The American Legion standings with 82.93 percent.

"We can achieve our 77,000 goal if we all stay focused and motivated," Membership Chairman Mark Dvorak said.

The next rally will be the Sweetheart Rally on Feb. 4 in New Prague.

Membership Chart As of Dec. 14, 2016

| District | 2017 Goal | Total 2016 | Total 2017 | Percent of Goal | Same Date '15 |
|-----------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|-----------------|---------------|
| 1 | 9,380 | 9,322 | 7,612 | 81.15 | 8,116 |
| 2 | 7,572 | 7,488 | 6,424 | 84.84 | 6,487 |
| 3 | 11,977 | 11,912 | 10,038 | 83.81 | 10,223 |
| 4 | 2,592 | 2,572 | 2,020 | 77.93 | 2,118 |
| 5 | 2,679 | 2,657 | 2,090 | 78.01 | 2,271 |
| 6 | 12,109 | 12,038 | 10,185 | 84.11 | 10,449 |
| 7 | 6,695 | 6,619 | 5,504 | 82.21 | 5,835 |
| 8 | 4,417 | 4,377 | 3,571 | 80.85 | 3,661 |
| 9 | 7,015 | 6,950 | 5,692 | 81.14 | 5,970 |
| 10 | 10,611 | 10,557 | 8,496 | 80.07 | 8,924 |
| At-large | 1,953 | 2,710 | 1,883 | 96.42 | 2,142 |
| Totals | 77,000 | 77,202 | 63,515 | 82.49 | 66,196 |

Waite Park presents colors at Gopher game



Waite Park Post 428, this year's official Department Color Guard, presented the flag at the University of Minnesota Gopher basketball game just before Christmas. Color bearers who can be seen, from left, are Tom Kunkel, Tom Fernlund, Michael Fernlund and Wes Thompson.

Tank driving in Vietnam

Ray Pittman wanted to be a helicopter pilot, but ended up driving tanks for the 11th Cav in Vietnam. He was on the road, or lack of road, nearly every day until his tank was blown up by a land mine.

By Al Zdon

Ray Pittman remembers one nurse saying to another nurse in a U.S. Army hospital in Saigon, "I don't think he's going to make it."

"That scared the shit out of me," he said.

Pittman survived, but his long recovery from having his tank blown up in Vietnam was far from over.

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Raymond Joseph Pittman was born in St. Cloud, lived in Hibbing for several years, Cambridge for a while, and then moved to North Branch with his family where he graduated from high school in 1967.

At North Branch he was a football player. "I loved football, but then I broke my nose and my mom and dad said I couldn't play anymore."

A war was going on in Vietnam in the 1960s. "I had a medical condition in third grade and so they held me back. I was a year older than most of my classmates. The draft board was standing outside the door of my high school when I graduated."

Pittman fooled them, though, by enlisting in the Army for three years instead. "I didn't want to be a grunt. Everybody I knew that went to war was a grunt, and I didn't want to."

His enlistment gave him additional leverage in choosing his Army career, and his first choice was to be a helicopter pilot.

"The trouble was they were pushing so many guys through helicopter school that I would have to wait nine months to get in, and then I would have to re-enlist for an additional year so I could do two tours in Vietnam. I really didn't want to do that."

His next choice was tank school at Fort Knox, following in the footsteps of his older brother. "I wanted to be where I'd have a place to sleep every night. I loved tank school. I'd go back and do it again."

After learning all about tanks, he went on to non-commissioned officer school, also at Ft. Knox, and then it was off to Vietnam.

"I was flown to Oakland and then got on a DC-8 that island-hopped all the way to Vietnam." He landed at Ton Son Nhut Air Base on July 1, 1968.

"I got off the plane. It's like when you're baking cookies in the oven and you open the door and you get that blast of heat. That's what Vietnam was like. That wall of heat just hit you and all you could say was 'Whoa.' It was 110 degrees outside."

He spent three days getting his jungle gear. "They didn't have those heavy fatigues like they did in the states. You couldn't survive in those. These were like a thin nylon."

He was given an M-16 rifle, and a .45 pistol and flown somewhere in a Caribou cargo plane. "I don't know where we went. I can't remember the name of the base camp. From there they took us in a Chinook helicopter into the jungle."

Pittman was assigned to the 11th Armored Cavalry "Blackhorse" Regiment in C Troop. The regiment was commanded by George S. Patton IV, son of the legendary World War II general.

"The helicopter landed in the middle of a wagon wheel formation. The tanks and tracks (armored personnel carriers) were in a circle with their guns pointing outwards." Also in the circle were two big guns: M-109 155 mm howitzers.

His first assignment was to stand watch that night, which meant sitting in the turret of an M48 Patton tank in charge of a .50 caliber machine gun.

"There I was, green as a cucumber, standing guard duty."

One of the tactics of the armored unit was to spray the surrounding brush with machine gun bullets every 15 min-

utes all night long. It was an effort to keep the enemy from sneaking into the American formation.

"That was strange enough, but then during the night one of the 155s fired a shell, right next to me. It was just this incredible boom, and it scared the bejesus out of me. I didn't know if it was incoming or outgoing or what."

Pittman survived his first night, and then joined his comrades in a continuous pursuit of the enemy. "The 11th Cav was a search and destroy outfit. We rarely stayed in the same place for more than one day. In the morning we just packed up our stuff and took off."

"We were trying to pick a fight with the enemy, and we were in fire fights a lot. We were poking around a bee's nest, trying to make them mad. We even went into Cambodia for a month."

But it wasn't quite the wild west. "The rules of engagement were just a joke. We couldn't fire, even if we were fired upon, from 6-9 every morning because the civilians were going to work. Then from 9-3 we could shoot at anything we wanted, and then from 3-6 it was restricted again as the civilians went home from work."

The troop was comprised of 11 vehicles including three tanks and eight APCs. Sometimes the going was easy, as when there were roads in the rubber plantations and the tracked vehicles could just rumble along. Other times, it meant slogging through the jungle.

"Especially in Cambodia, the tanks would just go up the vines until the weight of the tank brought them down again, and then it was up the vines and fall down again. That was thick jungle."

In Cambodia, the tankers communicated with the Montagnards, or mountain people, who were pro U.S. "They'd tell us where the gooks were, and we'd go after them."

If a situation began to go bad, the armored unit could call in help. "The F-4s would come in and drop napalm, or we

might get Cobras (attack helicopters) or even a gunship (attack propeller planes)."

Pittman started out on the lowest rung as a loader in the four-man tank crew. He worked his way up to gunner and then to driver over the next few months. The fourth position was tank commander, usually held by a higher ranking



RAY PITTMAN
During U.S. Army training in 1967



RAY PITTMAN
At home in North Branch