



## 'A Foundation for the Future'

National Commander Oxford describes how youth programs influence communities and America

By Tim Engstrom

ADAMS — A tour of southern Minnesota with 12 stops all began one mile north of the Iowa border, at Adams Post 146 with 100 people attending.

The American Legion National Commander James W. "Bill" Oxford said Minnesota was the 26th department he had visited since his term began in August. The traveling started in early September, and he and his aide, Larry Cline of Lincoln Post 30 in North Carolina, have had five days at home since.

Oxford is a paid-up-for-life member and past commander of Post 29 in Lenoir, North Carolina. He was Department of North Carolina commander in 2010-11. In the Marine Corps, he was an aviation electronic technician for the A-6 Intruder, serving in Vietnam. He was discharged as a sergeant in 1970, then joined the North Carolina National Guard. He attended officer candidate school and transferred to the Army Reserve. He retired as a colonel after 34 years, nine months and 10 days of military service.

"My only regret is I only had 34 years, nine months and 10 days to give," Oxford said.

His theme for his term is "A foundation for the future." He has been married to his wife, Frances, since 1967. They have a son, Charles (married to Deah Reid), and a daughter, Jackie (married to Mike Carr). They also have four grandsons.

Twelve stops? Yes. Here is the recap:

**Monday, Feb. 17**

**Adams Post 146:** Breakfast banquet

**Waseca Post 228:** Lunch banquet

**Albert Lea Post 56:** Dinner banquet

**Tuesday, Feb 18**

**Wells Post 210:** Breakfast banquet

**Madelia Post 19:** Lunch banquet

**Redwood Falls Post 38:** Dinner banquet

**Wednesday Feb. 19**

**Gaylord Post 433:** Breakfast banquet

**Mankato Post 11:** Lunch meet with young veterans

**Trexler's Hunting Preserve, Le Center:** Tour

**Montgomery Post 79:** Tour

**KCHK Radio, New Prague:** Interview

**New Prague Post 45:** Dinner banquet

After the Marine Corps, Oxford joined The American Legion for the Saturday night dances and before long began raising a family. He let his membership lapse. In 1985, he bumped into a Vietnam veteran who asked him to help with his town's Legion Baseball team. He came to a Monday night meeting at the Legion hall, and before the end of the meeting, not only was he a member, he was the post commander.

He served three years as post commander, then 15 years as post adjutant, before moving up in the district and department ranks in North Carolina. In 2012, he accepted a request to go through the steps to become national commander in 2019-20.

At many banquets, Oxford described the travels. In Hawaii,

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National Commander James W. "Bill" Oxford speaks at Waseca Post 228 in front of a large American flag.



National Commander Bill Oxford meets a New Prague police officer who provided an escort into town.



National Commander Bill Oxford shares a laugh with Department Commander Mark Dvorak at Redwood Falls Post 38.

### Legion at Twins set for May 9

MINNEAPOLIS — The 20th annual American Legion Family Night with the Minnesota Twins has been determined.

It takes place Saturday, May 9, at 6:10 p.m. Department of Minnesota Commander Mark Dvorak will throw out the first pitch. Another Legionnaire will raise the flag.

Posts can order tickets as a group or Legionnaires can order them individually. For groups of 10 or more, or to request different seating options, reach out to Brian Bessler at 612-659-4083 or brianbessler@twinsbaseball.com.

Diamond View seats on the Terrace Level are on sale for \$18. Field

#### How to order

Go online to:  
[groupmatics.events/event/Americanlegion54](http://groupmatics.events/event/Americanlegion54)

Box high seats are \$32, while Infield Box high seats are \$43. There is a service fee added to each order.

When ordering, be sure to provide Post information (typically, the city and Post number) so that each Post can receive recognition on the scoreboard during the game.

Seating is limited, and tickets are available on a first-come, first-served basis. The purchase deadline is April 18.

### Veterans Day on the Hill aims to be later and more effective

Veterans Day on the Hill is later in the legislative calendar than it has been in the past. This year, it is set for April 20.

But there is a reason for the later date, said Trent Dilks, adjutant for the Disabled American Veterans Department of Minnesota and event organizer.

"The reality of the legislative process is that not every bill is going to make it," he said. "Having it later, we can focus on the few bills that have made it through the process and stand a chance of being passed."

Being an election year means there will be more politicking than usual as lawmakers seek to motivate their bases

and their donors, Dilks noted.

The challenge for veterans is to show numbers and that we will vote according to veterans issues. Dilks said that too often veterans legislation will die quiet deaths because there isn't much opposition.

"We don't have a bad guy, so we are fighting complacency at the Capitol," he said.

How? Well, every committee passes every veterans-related bill, because everyone says they support veterans, but then the measures magically don't get added to the big omnibus bills that end

Continued on Page 9

# Commander describes visits to Hawaii, Taiwan, Australia

Continued from Page 1

he participated in the transfer of remains from Punchbowl Crater National Cemetery to the POW/MIA Accounting Agency.

"It made me proud to be an American," he said, adding that he liked the enthusiasm the scientists had for their jobs.

With the remains they would identify, often with bits as small as a coin, the person to whom they belong.

He urged veterans to provide their DNA to the VA, which can use it to identify remains.

In Taiwan, Oxford was welcomed by the president, Tsai Ing-wen. She welcomed the national commander the same as any dignitary. Oxford described Taiwan as the most important American ally in the region, and he was there to reinforce the decades-old friendship.

In Australia, he met with the governor-general, David Hurley, who is appointed by the Queen of the United Kingdom. Hurley took Oxford on a tour of the estate of the executive mansion in a golf cart. Oxford appreciated that the chief guy drove the cart himself and described the grounds.

He told the story of his travels to emphasize a point: "The American Legion is more than 100 years old, and yet it is just as valuable, important and relevant as when it started."

Present-day Legionnaires are the future of the organization, he said.

"We have the ability to impact the future of this country with our youth programs," Oxford said.

He said Legion Baseball fields 55,000 players (and 80 in the Baseball Hall of Fame, with 50 percent of MLB players having played Legion Baseball). There are 18,000 Boys State delegates and 14,000 Girls State delegates (President Bill Clinton was a Boys State delegate). The Oratorical Contest brings in 10,000 participants (Vice President



National Commander Bill Oxford looks at Adams Post 146's military museum. Post Commander Lynn Sathre guides him through the museum.



District 2 Commander Brad Pagel speaks with National Commander Bill Oxford at Wells Post 210.



Department Commander Mark Dvorak, Albert Lea Mayor Vern Rasmussen, National Commander Bill Oxford, Post 56 Commander Jeff Olson and Department Membership Director Sy Fix stand beside a welcome sign at the Albert Lea American Legion Post on Feb. 17.

Mike Pence was a state champion). Add in 60,000 scholars. Plus many young people are in other Legion-related activities such as shooting sports. That comes to 200,000.

Take that number five years forward and five years back, that's now 2 million children.

But it takes members to run the programs, he said.

The all-time high for membership was 3.3 million in 1946. The goal this year is around 1.8 million. He said the Legion Act opened membership to 4.2 million new veterans.

"I guarantee everyone knows someone who is eligible for membership who is not a Legionnaire," Oxford said.

In addition, it would strengthen The American Legion's

voice in the nation's capital. Politicians would pay greater attention to 3.5 million veterans instead of 2 million.

He highlighted some of the legislative success The American Legion has had over the years: the existence of the VA, the G.I. Bill, the U.S. Flag Code, the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act (among other efforts to recognize of the effects of Agent Orange) and the Mission Act, among many others.

Oxford described a visit to Puerto Rico, where a Post commander was helping families in the wake of devastating earthquakes despite his own five-year-old house lying on its side in ruin.

"He should or could have been taking care of his own

house, but he was at his Post helping the community. That's what the Legion is," Oxford said.

## About Oxford

- Marines, National Guard, Army Reserve
- Former mayor of Cahah's Mountain, N.C.
- Bachelor's in environmental studies
- Coach, umpire, referee, administrator and public address announcer for youth sports, including Legion Baseball
- Masonic Lodge
- N.C. Army Retirees Council

## National Commander's Project

The National Commander's Project is The American Legion Veterans and Children Foundation. All contributions to the foundation go directly to the Legion's Temporary Financial Assistance program and to Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation efforts — primarily training for American Legion service officers who work tirelessly to help veterans and families understand their health-care benefits, education and employment opportunities. Many posts along the tour donated to the project.

Donations can be made at [www.legion.org/donate](http://www.legion.org/donate).



Larry Cline of Lincolnton Post 30, North Carolina, is the aide to the national commander and took photos that will make their way onto the national website: [legion.org](http://legion.org).

## On suicide: 'Say something'

ALBERT LEA — At the Albert Lea stop, National Commander James W. "Bill" Oxford spoke on the topic of veteran suicides.

He said 22 veterans a day, on average, die by suicide.

"Why are we allowing that to happen?" Oxford asked.

He said the numbers say six of the 22 are enrolled in Veterans Affairs mental health care.

"What do we do about the other 16?" he asked.

The commander called for removing the stigma surrounding talking about suicide and letting men and women know that asking for help is OK.

He said preventing suicide will take everyone: family, friends, teachers, bartenders, co-workers, anyone in the person's circle of friends and daily routines.

"We are our brother's keeper," Oxford said. "If you see something, say something."

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is 1-800-273-8255, veterans press 1.

## Attendance

- Adams: 100
- Waseca: 50
- Albert Lea: 65
- Wells: 45
- Madelia: 50
- Redwood Falls: 75
- Gaylord: 85
- New Prague: 130

## Media coverage

- Albert Lea Tribune
- Arlington Enterprise
- Faribault Co. Register
- Gaylord Hub
- KCHK Radio
- KEYC TV (Mankato)
- KIMT TV (Mason City)
- KTTC TV (Rochester)
- Madelia Time-Messenger
- Mankato Free Press
- Mower Co. Independent
- Owatonna People's Press
- Redwood Falls Gazette
- St. James Plaindealer
- St. Peter Herald
- Waseca County News

(Several additional outlets mentioned the national commander was coming.)

Advertising Material

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### Attorney Jasper Berg

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SCENES FROM THE COMMANDER'S TOUR See photo galleries from each stop at [mnlegion.org](http://mnlegion.org) under "News," including certificate photos.



As a joke, NEC Man Bill Barbknecht gives a pajama party T-shirt to Department Commander Mark Dvorak that says "Just Hug Me" at New Prague Post 45.



A stuffed giraffe and rhinoceros hang overhead during the national commander's stop at Traxler's Hunting Preserve near Le Center.



American Legion National Commander Bill Oxford responds to a question during an interview with Tom Goetzinger at KCHK 95.5 FM Radio in New Prague.



National Commander Bill Oxford sits on a snowmobile parked in front of Redwood Falls Post 38.



A show of hands answers who attended Minnesota State University in Mankato. Hosted by Post 11, the national commander fielded questions from young veterans.



Lillian Tostenrud, 8, reads a patriotic poem to close the evening's proceedings at Redwood Falls Post 38.

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Let your legislator know why you support history during **History Matters Day at the Capitol**, Mar 5, Minnesota State Capitol, St. Paul. Register at [mnhs.org/historymatters](http://mnhs.org/historymatters).



## 2

### ATTEND WWII ROUND TABLE

Hear presentations on topics in World War II history. Upcoming: **Operation Varsity 75th Anniversary** (Mar 10) and **The Chief of Staff for Eisenhower** (Mar 24). Minnesota History Center, St. Paul.



## 3

### CELEBRATE THE VOTE

Find out about Minnesota women who helped secure women's right to vote in 1919. **"Votes for Minnesota Women" Tour**, Mar 14, Minnesota State Capitol, St. Paul.



## 4

### USE YOUR DISCOUNT

Veterans always receive discounted admission at MNHS historic sites and museums. Visit soon! [mnhs.org/visit](http://mnhs.org/visit)

# Thanks, National Commander Oxford

Greetings, Minnesota American Legion Family.

This article will contain a few thank-yous and comments about membership.

First and foremost, a big thanks to our national commander, James W. "Bill" Oxford, and his aide, Larry Cline, for visiting our Department of Minnesota.

The only Legion position he ran for was district commander. All other positions he has held in The American Legion, including national commander, he was asked if he would consider running for those positions.

Traveling with our national commander, it became obvious to me of his tremendous leadership ability. Commander Oxford's basic message was the following: As he travels to foreign countries, the respect he and his aide receive are equivalent to a head of state or an important dignitary. The respect for our American Legion by the leaders of these foreign countries is second-to-none!

The American dream is alive and well; he came from a poor, humble background growing up dirt poor in North Carolina to become The American Legion's national commander. He emphasized how important our Americanism and Children and Youth programs are to the future of our country.

"We are influencing the youth of our country and creating our

## Commander's Column

Mark Dvorak



future leaders through our many programs such as Oratorical, Legion Baseball, Boys State, Boys Nation, Girls State, Girls Nation and Junior Shooting Sports, just to name a few."

Also, he mentioned that it takes members to continue to run our many programs, and we all need to be involved with recruiting and signing up new members.

Thank you to the following posts for hosting our national commander: Adams Post 146, Waseca Post 228, Albert Lea Post 56, Wells Post 210, Madelia Post 19, Redwood Falls Post 38, Gaylord Post 433, Mankato Post 11 and New Prague Post 45.

The hospitality shown by our American Legion Family was wonderful and inspiring. You made me proud to be your department commander!

Now, a few comments about membership. We are doing well as a Department; currently Minnesota is in sixth place and is at 89.58 percent. The 90 percent target date is March 11, and all membership needs to be into the Department by noon on March 10. March 11 is also our cutoff date for our Big Twelve competition, if we can achieve 90.2 percent, our Department will receive \$2,500 for computer

equipment from National.

I'm asking Department leadership, District leadership and Posts to work together and personally contact all expired Post memberships and Post 1982s, special emphasis on the expired 1982s as they will count as a new member. If a Post has a question about how to access MyLegion.org in order to get their Post 1982s, please check with your District leadership.

Let's all work together and get this done!

My final thank-yous are to the following: Department Adjutant Mike Maxa, Department Communication Director Tim Engstrom and Department Membership Director Sy Fix. You are all true professionals and did an amazing job representing the Department of Minnesota American Legion during our travels with The American Legion national commander! God bless America, God bless our American Legion Family!

*Mark Dvorak is the commander of The American Legion Department of Minnesota.*

# I'm proud of the Legion Family in Minn.

Greetings American Legion Family,

It's getting closer to riding season! Spring is just around the corner. You are going to be seeing a lot of advertisements and events (if you're on Facebook) coming up in the future.

The American Legion Rider family is out there doing some great things and have a lot of rides set up for the spring, summer and fall. Please support them, and please ask them to support you. We are a family, and we are great at working together.

One of the things I would

## Legion Riders

Paul Hassing



like to see this year is better communication between the chapters. We all have a lot of things going on and we could use each other's support. We should also be communicating with the rest of the Legion family. We are all after the same goal, and that is to support veterans and their families.

I am so proud of the Legion family in Minnesota. There are so many great people in all of

the organization that it would be a shame if you didn't get to meet all them. Love all of you.

*Paul Hassing is the director of the American Legion Riders for the Department of Minnesota.*

# Part 2: Will Minneapolis do right by child?

## Guest Column

Tommy Johnson



2. MPHA discuss changes to MPHA policy to ensure this would never happen again.

MPHA was adamant: Despite the evidence of over one year's correspondence of MPHA discussing this veteran and his fiancé with the VFW, including correspondence involving HUD and Sen. Tina Smith's Office, MPHA has now taken the position that regulations prohibit MPHA discussing a veteran and his family that the agency had been discussing for over one year. I guess if I was trying to defend the indefensible, I'd pivot to: "Oh no, now we can't talk about that!" too.

Instead of talking about the case, Engstrom spoke in terms of the policy issue — putting children of veterans who lose their HUD-VASH voucher by any means (such as death, abandonment, incarceration, etc.) on the street — and he was surprised the nine-member MPHA Board of Commissioners or the staff had not discussed how to

handle that situation.

After all, a parent of this child was willing to die for this country, for this state and for this city. Can't we return the favor?

Scott and Hanson promised him the organization would have that discussion, look through its policies and get back to Engstrom.

We will continue fighting for this combat veteran's fiancé and his child and continue fighting to ensure MPHA never kicks the kid of a veteran to the curb again. If you'd like to help out, please call me at 612-424-0482 and leave a message or email [TwoPutTommy@gmail.com](mailto:TwoPutTommy@gmail.com).

*Tommy Johnson is a member of Bloomington American Legion Post 550, Hopkins VFW Post 425 and the legislative officer for the VFW Department of Minnesota.*

## Editorial: Vet Centers remain a high priority

The American Legion Department of Minnesota has been involved in raising the profile of the need to expand Vet Centers in Minnesota, and this month it resulted in action.

Working with members of the Commander's Task Force, the Legion and VFW drafted a letter and revised state-by-state comparisons to show how Minnesota has fallen behind. We also sent emails, made phone calls, spoke with key officials and gave presentations.

This state has three Vet Centers, two in the metro and one in Duluth. There is one for every 98,126. (North Dakota alone has four, one for every 11,284 veterans.) Most states fall into the range of one per 40,000 to 75,000. It is clear the Vet Center system of readjustment counseling is underserving rural Minnesota. Other states have expanded. We have not. It's our turn.

On Feb. 20, U.S. Rep. Collin Peterson, who

sits on the House Veterans Affairs Committee, issued a news release. He led the Minnesota House Delegation in drafting a letter to Secretary of the VA Robert Wilkie. This letter called for increasing the level of Vet Center services in Greater Minnesota.

Department Commander Mark Dvorak commented in the news release. In it, he said: "The American Legion serves veterans and active service members by ensuring they receive the quality care promised to them. That includes mental health counseling for them and their loved ones as they make difficult adjustments in life, such as going from warriors to civilians and from combat to peace. Vet Centers are crucial to dealing with PTSD, suicide, homelessness, loss of a sense of purpose and similar transitions. As we travel all corners of the state, it becomes clear we need to expand Vet Centers."

# A poem helped me during a hard time

There are times in each of our lives where we feel alone in our troubles and wonder "why" God has let these things happen to us.

In many cases we have a strong network of family and friends to help us along the way and we still struggle.

When my daughter, Teresa, passed away seven years ago, I asked the big "Why?" of God, and I just couldn't understand. I felt betrayed and angry because we were a God-loving family and were basically good people and strong in our faith.

My daughter had gone through several trials with our health and other things and had worked or way through them, But, this time ...

... I really struggled. A friend had sent me this poem and its words have helped me to understand that God was with me all along. The poem:

One night I dreamed a dream. As I was walking along the beach with my Lord.

## Chaplain's Corner

Betty Jass



Across the dark sky flashed scenes from my life.

For each scene, I noticed two sets of footprints in the sand, One belonging to me and one to my Lord.

After the last scene of my life flashed before me,

I looked back at the footprints in the sand.

I noticed that at many times along the path of my life, especially at the very lowest and saddest times, there was only one set of footprints.

This really troubled me, so I asked the Lord about it.

"Lord, you said once I decided to follow you,

You'd walk with me all the way.

But I noticed that during the saddest and most troublesome

times of my life, there was only one set of footprints.

I don't understand why, when I needed You the most, You would leave me."

He whispered, "My precious child, I love you and will never leave you

Never, ever, during your trials and testings.

When you saw only one set of footprints,

It was then that I carried you."

Thank you God for your presence in my life. Amen..

*Betty Jass is the chaplain for The American Legion Department of Minnesota.*

The Minnesota

# Legionnaire

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4 PILLARS  
1 FAMILY

# What's happening?

## Testimonial Dinner is coming April 10

NEW PRAGUE — Department Commander Mark Dvorak's Testimonial Dinner is scheduled for April 18 at the Park Ballroom, 300 Lexington Ave. S., New Prague.

The Park Ballroom, of course, is also New Prague Post 45.

Social time begins at 4 p.m., with a dinner at 5:30 p.m. and a program to follow. Cost is \$20 per person, with checks payable to Park Ballroom.

For information or reservations, please contact Dvorak's wife, Linda Dvorak, the commander of the 3rd District, at 952-457-2129 or ldvorak56@gmail.com. Reservations need to be in by April 10.

## Minnesota Legion College accepting applicants

Legion College is now available without leaving Minnesota.

It is planned for Friday, May 29, through Sunday, May 31, at Camp Ripley.

One of the organizers, Denise Milton of Bagley Post 16, said: "This is an opportunity for prospective leaders in our organization to become savvy in all things 'Legion.' This is especially for those who want to make a difference

in The American Legion and have the knowledge to do it! Also, it is a great opportunity to network with other like-minded veterans."

Legion College enhances knowledge and appreciation of The American Legion and teaches the core values and contributions of the organization, its Auxiliary, Sons of The American Legion and many subordinate programs. It prepares Legionnaires for leadership positions in Posts, Districts, Counties and Departments through education, development and motivation. The curriculum challenges student leaders to think critically and creatively about issues confronting the Legion.

The tuition is \$150 per student, which includes housing and class materials. The application form is available at mnlegion.org. Just download and email and postal mail to the addresses shown on the Legion College page of

the Department of Minnesota website. The deadline to sign up is April 15.

## Roundtables: Fall of Saigon, Oper. Varsity, Beetle

ST. PAUL — The Vietnam War History Roundtable presents "The Fall of Saigon: 45th Anniversary" at its March 16 gathering.

Saigon was captured by the North Vietnamese Army on April 30, 1975, pretty much ending the war. Speaker John Murray served as the Marine Corps logistical officer during this event making sure that American evacuation helicopters were operational and overseeing the dumping overboard of escaping Vietnamese helicopters, for which there was no

room on American ships.

American military and civilian personnel and Vietnamese will discuss their experiences surrounding the fall of Saigon and the after effects of the North Vietnamese victory.

It looks like there are two gatherings for the Dr. Harold C. Deutsch World War II History Roundtable in March.

James Fenelon, author of "Four Hours of Fury," and veterans will discuss the largest airborne operation of World War II — Operation Varsity, across the Rhine near Wesel and Hamminkeln, Germany. The roundtable is at 7 p.m. March 10 at the Minnesota History Center, in advance of the 75th anniversary this month.

Then at 7 p.m. March 24, Daniel Crosswell, author of "Beetle," will present the contributions of Gen. Walter Bedell Smith in guiding the difficult

**Continued on Page 7**

## Taps



**Anderson, Clarence M.,** 88, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Dec. 25, 2019. He was a member of Detroit Lakes Post 15.

**Baker, Donald Otto,** 98, Army Air Force veteran of World War II, died Jan. 22, 2020. He received a Bronze War. He was a member of Pine Island Post 184 for more than 50 years.

**Berger, John Robert "JR,"** 71, Marine veteran of Vietnam and career Army National Guard veteran, died Jan. 19, 2020. He also worked for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. He was a past commander and chaplain for Winona Post 9 and a 48-year Legion member.

**Berndt, Donald C.,** 92, Army Air Corps and Counter Intelligence Corps veteran of World War II, died Dec. 19, 2019. He also served with the Air Force Reserve during the Vietnam War. He was a member of Coon Rapids Post 334.

**Burgdorf, Lester D.,** "Burgie," 89, Air Force veteran who "flew a typewriter" during the Korean War, died Feb. 7, 2020. He was a member of Plainview Post 179.

**Burtch, Eugene Earl,** 97, Army veteran of World War II (Europe), died Jan. 17, 2020. He fought with the 104th Infantry Division "Timberwolves" and earned a Bronze Star and Purple Heart. He was a member of Austin Post 91.

**Cooley, William E.,** 75, Air Force veteran of Vietnam, died Jan. 31, 2020. He was a member of Waconia Post 150.

**Debbaut, Delmar,** 86, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Jan. 19, 2020. He was a member of Milroy Post 274.

**DeMaris, John "Jack" Eldon,** 75, Marine veteran of the Vietnam War, died Feb. 16, 2020. He was in the 1st Battalion of the 1st Marines of the 1st Marine Division. He was a member of Park Rapids Post 212.

**Dingle, James H.,** 97, Army veteran of World War II, died Feb. 6, 2020. He served in the 11th Armored Division and was awarded two Purple Hearts and a Bronze Star. He was a 57-year member of Coon Rapids Post 334.

**Dohrn, Richard,** 75, Army veteran of Vietnam era, died Jan. 24, 2020. He was a member of Lake City Post 110.

**Dressen,, Eugene "Gene,"** 91, Marine veteran of 1946-47 who was called back to serve in the Air Force 1950-54 (Korean era), died Feb. 3, 2020. He was a member of Redwood Falls Post 38.

**Drewelow, John W.,** 87, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Jan. 19, 2020. He was a member of Graceville Post 297.

**Ekstrom, Leroy,** 97, Army veteran of World War II, died Dec. 26, 2019. He was a member of Willmar Post 167.

**Ensrud, Gayle B.,** 81, Navy veteran of Vietnam, died Dec. 19, 2019. He was a past commander of Blue Earth Post 89.

**Fierek, D. William "Spike,"** 97, Army Air Force veteran of World War II, died Jan. 30, 2020. He served as an armorer in the 392nd Fighter Squadron in Europe. He was selected to the Minnesota delegation for the 2004 dedication of the National World War II Memorial. He was the Department of Minnesota historian in 1993, District 8 commander in 1994, District 8 vice commander for five years and volunteer for 13 years as club and gambling manager for West Duluth Post 71.

**Flintrop, Margaret,** 92, Air Force veteran of Korea, died Jan. 10, 2020. She was a member of Waseca Post 228.

**Gratz, Richard A.,** 90, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Jan. 7, 2020. He was a member of Willmar Post 167.

**Grausam, Michael Henry,** 74, Navy veteran of the Vietnam War, died Feb. 20, 2020. He spent time in Vietnam with both the Navy and Marines. He was a member of New Ulm Post 132.

**Gronewold, Peter,** 88, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Jan. 22, 2020. He served in the 3rd Division, 65th Infantry, Heavy Motor Company. He was a member of Round Lake Post 461.

## Obituaries

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

Please send to tengstrom@mnlegion.org or in the mail to the Department of Minnesota.

**Haglund, Danny,** 71, Navy veteran of the Vietnam War, died Jan. 31, 2020. He was a member of West Duluth Post 71.

**Haugen, James L.,** 93, Army veteran of World War II, died Jan. 22, 2020. He was a 55-year member of Litchfield Post 104.

**Horrman, Alfred "Al,"** 103, Coast Guard veteran of World War II, died Jan. 22, 2020. He was a radar operator of Patrol Frigate 42 (PF-42), the USS Van Buren. He was a member of Hutchinson Post 96.

**Jacobson, Harold,** 89, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Nov. 27, 2019. He helped build the Osan Air Base. He was a past commander and 66-year member of Rushford Post 94.

**Jost, Paul J.,** 93, Army veteran of World War II, died Jan. 16, 2020. He was a member of Morris Post 29.

**July, James R.,** 88, Army veteran during the Korean War, died Jan. 26, 2020. He served as a medic at Fort Knox. He was an honor guard member at Sandstone Post 151.

**Karels, Donald,** 83, Army veteran of Vietnam, died Feb. 1, 2020. He was a member of Waconia Post 150.

**Kiger, Harley N.,** 97, Army veteran of World War II, died Dec. 31, 2019. He served with the 3rd Armored Division under Gen. George Patton. He was a member of Grand Rapids Post 60.

**Kingsbury, Michael A. "Mike,"** 73, Army veteran of the Vietnam War, died Feb. 10, 2020. He was a member of St. Paul Post 450.

**Kruse, Arthur,** 92, Army veteran of World War II, died Jan. 12, 2020. He served in the occupation of Japan. He was a member of Bigelow Post 496.

**Kujawa, Dennis,** 77, Army veteran of Vietnam, died Feb. 12, 2020. He was a 30-year member of Hillman Post 602.

**Kurtzweg, Earl,** 88, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Jan. 25, 2020. He retired as a chief warrant officer 4 after 41 years of service in the Army and Army National Guard. He was a member of New Ulm Post 132.

**Larson, Donald E.,** 93, Navy veteran of World War II, died Jan. 22, 2020. He was a member and past commander of Adams Post 146.

**Loger, Lawrence L.,** 87, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Feb. 2, 2020. He was a member of Adrian Post 32.

**Loscheider, Robert H.,** 94, Army veteran of World War II, died Dec. 2, 2019. He served with the 103rd Infantry Division in the European Theater and received a Purple Heart. He was a 70-year member of Grand Rapids Post 60.

**Lund, Harold J.,** 86, Navy veteran of Korea, died Feb. 3, 2020. He was a member of Chanhassen Post 580.

**Lundstrom, Roger,** 77, Army veteran of Vietnam, died Dec. 29, 2019. He was a member of Thief River Falls Post 117.

**Meister, Roy L.,** 91, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Jan. 1, 2020. He was a member of Richfield Post 435.

**Melberg, James R.,** 86, Army veteran of Korean War stationed in Germany, died Feb. 3, 2020. He was a member of Roseville Post 542.

**Micka, Wayne L.,** 85, Army veteran of the Korean War, died February 17, 2020. He was a Morse Code radio operator in Germany. He was a member of Hutchinson Post 96.

**Mikolasek, Francis T.,** 85, Army veteran of Vietnam, died Jan. 11, 2020. He was a member of New Prague Post 45.

**Monson, Lyle A.,** 79, Navy veteran of Vietnam, died Jan. 21, 2020. He was a member of Crosslake Post 500.

**Musser, Thomas,** 88, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Jan. 28, 2020. He was stationed in Germany and assigned to play on Army sports teams. He was a member of Marshall Post 113.

**Pantzke, Steve,** 69, Marine veteran of the Vietnam War, Nov. 25, 2019. He was a member of Flensburg Post 136.

**Pashke, Alexander "Mr. Mayor,"** 88, veteran of the Korean War with the 1st Marine Division, died Jan. 23, 2020. He was a member of East Grand Forks Post 157.

**Petty, Marvin "Bud,"** 93, Army veteran of World War II, died Jan. 19, 2020. He was a paratrooper and a glider infantryman. He was a 43-year member of Hillman Post 602.

**Priebe, John Patrick,** 49, Army veteran of Panama and the National Guard, died Jan. 3, 2020. He was a member of Waseca Post 228.

**Przybilla, Roger Edmund,** 73, Army veteran of Vietnam, died Jan. 29, 2020. He served with the 11th Armor Cavalry Regiment Air Troop. He was a member of Rice Post 473.

**Ritt, Richard,** 59, Air Force veteran of Vietnam, died Feb. 11, 2020. He was a member of Chanhassen Post 580.

**Rohlf, Edward,** 89, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Dec. 25, 2019. He was a 40-year member of Cambridge Post 290.

**Ryan, James J.,** 73, Army veteran of Vietnam, died Dec. 10, 2019. He was a member of Anoka Post 102.

**Schulte, William,** 68, Army National Guard veteran of Vietnam, died Jan. 21, 2020. He was a member of Albert Lea Post 56.

**Skaar, Gerald C.,** 85, a Navy veteran of Korean, died Jan. 8, 2020. He was a member of Albert Lea Post 56.

**Sothorn, Bruce S. "Sammy,"** 100, Army Air Corps veteran of World War II, died Feb. 7, 2020. He was a master sergeant electrician crew chief for the 8th Army Air Corps, servicing B-24s in England and received a Bronze Star. He was a 66-year member of Falldin Post 555.

**Stensland, Ronald W.,** 90, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Jan. 27, 2020. He was a member of Blue Earth Post 89 for more than 50 years. He served many years on the honor guard.

**Tessmer, Daryl A.,** 83, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Feb. 18, 2020. He was a member of Caledonia Post 191.

**Thompson, Harold W.,** 95, Army veteran of World War II, died Feb. 3, 2020. He served 212 continuous days in combat on Luzon Island in the Philippines, as well as serving in New Guinea and Korea. He was a member of New Richland Post 75.

**Thompson, Harold W.,** 95, Army veteran of World War II, died Feb. 3, 2020. He was a member of New Richland Post 75.

**Walk, Daryl,** 91, veteran of the Korean War, died Jan. 27, 2020. He was a member of Albert Lea Post 56.

**Wetjen, Millen,** 95, Army Air Corps veteran of World War II, died Jan. 25, 2020. He served with the 485th Bomb Group in Italy. He was a member of North Branch Post 85.

**Wilde, Leslie K.,** 69, Army and Army Reserves veteran, died Jan. 2, 2020. He served with the 538th Engineers in the Vietnam War. He was a member of Thief River Falls Post 117.

**Wixcey, Charles "Chuck,"** 92, Army veteran of World War II (Germany) and the Korean War (Japan), died Jan. 15, 2020. He was a past commander and a member of Hutchinson Post 96.

**Woodward, Neil D.,** 87, veteran of the Korean War, died Feb. 2, 2020. He was a member of Cloquet Post 262.

## Corrections

**Ruchti, Ronald C.,** 76, Navy veteran of the Vietnam War, died Dec. 17, 2019. He was a member of Willmar Post 167.

Also, in the February issue, it said Albert B. Russ had died, instead of Gayle B. Enrud of Blue Earth Post 89. Russ remains very much alive.

# Battle over long wait times continues

With the recent implementation of the Mission Act (June 6, 2019), which included a complete overhaul of VA's Care in the Community Program, veterans like myself had expectations that we would have expedited access to care in the community if VA couldn't deliver care in a timely manner. This VA reform is an ongoing attempt to find a solution hoping to expedite veteran's access to treatment and never having another epidemic like the Phoenix VA wait-time scandal in 2014, where veterans died while waiting for care.

The VA's Inspector General recently released a report that found there was an average of a two-month wait time in 2018 for veterans to access appointments in the community and warns that the problem may get worse with the Mission Act reform.

The report found wait times in 2018 were driven from the lack of sufficient administrative staffing at VA medical centers.

To fully understand where VA is today, let's look back prior to the Mission Act, when Congress passed the Veterans Access, Choice and Accountability Act of 2014 in response to the 2014 Phoenix scandal. Under Choice, VA's third-party administrator (TPA) for the Care in the Community Program was Health Net Federal Services (HNFS).

HNFS was responsible for everything except preauthorizing the patient for care in the community, this included establishing a network of contract providers, communicating and scheduling appointments with patients, answering billing questions and paying the contract providers.

VA quickly found out that they were no longer in-charge of their customer service, which at the time became one of VA's highest priorities, to win back the hearts and minds of veterans after the scandal. Over about four years of the programs existence there were several reforms to the program which only complicated things for all parties, including veterans, VA, TPA and the contract providers. Veterans had nowhere to turn for answers; VA referred to the

## VA & Rehabilitation

Jeremy Wolfsteller



TPA and vice versa. Providers began opting out of the program after long delays in getting reimbursed for delivered care and VA couldn't do anything about it other than take the blame.

So, this brings us back to the Mission Act and the overhaul of the Care in the Community Program. This time VA changed its TPA to a TriWest which was well established for 17 years administering DOD's TRICARE program. VA also wanted to take ownership of their customer service back, working directly with their patients not relying on the third-party administrator.

As of June 6, 2019, VA did exactly that taking over the responsibility of coordinating and scheduling care for all veterans that have a consult to community care. What VA didn't anticipate was the increase in staffing that would be required for each VA Medical Center to facilitate the demand.

In 2018, 39 percent of patients were sent for treatment outside a VA hospital because the government's facilities could not provide care in a timely manner, investigators reported. With the Mission Act's implementation, the workload to transfer VA patients to private care could swell from 684,000 to 3.7 million, now that the eligibility for veterans to seek private care has expanded under the Mission Act.

Recently, The American Legion Department Rehabilitation Committee conducted its System Worth Saving Site Visit with Minneapolis VA Health Care System where they were able to direct questions to facility leadership. Questions surrounding veterans waiting for their community care appointments were addressed and leadership understood and were aware of the problem. With approximately 100 staff in its Community Care Program which consist of schedulers and clinical staff it's not nearly

enough to keep up with the high referral rate to community care.

With Optum taking over Feb. 19, 2020, there might be an option to have them assist with some scheduling, although it will require a interoperability scheduling package. Feedback was also provided to the committee about an initiative the VA is working on called "Referral Coordination Initiative" whereby VA will coordinate much of the care for veterans before the consult is sent to the Care in the Community Office.

This ensures the VA is doing all they can in the hospital before sending the veteran out in the Community. If it still makes most sense to make the referral to Care in the Community the VA has a better prepared consult that will speed up the process for the Care in the Community Office. Minneapolis VA is piloting this initiative with hematology, oncology and GI and are seeing beneficial results. Looking at expanding the initiative to include higher cost clinics next like surgical.

Lastly, I'll add that if VA's projections are correct regarding veterans choosing to go outside the VA for their care, could VA Medical Centers start to atrophy over time? If a higher percentage of appropriations for facilities go to pay their private sector contracts, does that mean VA's reimbursements for internal care provided will drop? Could this effect their budget for infrastructure improvements, expanding services and hiring more doctors, clinicians, social workers, suicide prevention coordinators etc.? Only time will tell.

*Jeremy Wolfsteller is the Department of Minnesota service officer. His email is jwolfsteller@mnlegion.org.*

# Watercolor depicts USS Mpls-St. Paul under lift bridge

By Pat Dolan

DULUTH — The Minnesota Navy League Council has commissioned a watercolor of the USS Minneapolis-Saint Paul (LCS-21) transiting under the iconic Aerial Lift Bridge in Duluth.

The ship will be commissioned by the Navy in the Port of Duluth in the spring of 2021. This will be the first time a naval ship has been commissioned within the state of Minnesota.

The USS Minneapolis-Saint Paul is one of the Navy's newest warships. It is being built in Marinette, Wisconsin, and is a Littoral Combat Ship (LCS) that will operate in waters close to shore.

The vessel will have a vertical launchpad for helicopters and unmanned aerial vehicles, a ramp for small boats that can be used by small assault forces.

USS Minneapolis-Saint Paul is the second ship in naval service named after Minnesota's Twin Cities. The first vessel named Minneapolis-Saint Paul was a submarine decommissioned from Naval service in 2008.

The artist, John T. Salminen, is a Minnesotan born and raised in St. Paul. He earned his bachelor's degree and master's degree from the University of Minnesota and lives in Duluth. Salminen is a signature member of numerous prestigious art societies in the



The USS Minneapolis-Saint Paul, depicted in this John T. Salminen watercolor, will reach Duluth for commissioning in spring 2021. Prints will be for sale soon.

United States including The American Watercolor Society, The National Watercolor Society, The Transparent Watercolor Society of America and Allied Artists.

He serves as a board member of the American Watercolor Society and is the president of the International Masters of Watercolour Association centered in Shanghai.

His website is johnsalminen.com.

The Minnesota Navy League Council will sell prints as soon as it establishes the production process on its website at navyleaguemn.org.

You, or your business, or your family can support the commissioning of the USS

Minneapolis-Saint Paul in any dollar amount. Send a contribution to USS Minneapolis-Saint Paul Commissioning Committee treasurer, Captain Mark Stange, USNR (Ret.) at Captain Mark Stange USNR (Ret), 655 Evergreen Circle, Shoreview, MN 55126.

Let's make the state of Minnesota proud by supporting this iconic event.

The Navy League of the United States, Minnesota Council is a 501(c)(5) organization whose role is to bring attention to the importance of the naval sea services. The USS Minneapolis-Saint Paul Commissioning Committee is a project of the Navy League of the United States.

*Pat Dolan is the vice president of communications for the Minnesota Navy League.*

## 16th Military Ball is April 25 in Spring Grove

SPRING GROVE — The 16th annual Military Ball is scheduled for Saturday, April 25, at the Fest Building, 110 N. Division Ave., Spring Grove.

Hosted by the military family, the evening includes a catered meal, presentation of colors, toasts to the branches of service, POW/MIA ceremony, roll call, "Taps," speaker, photographs, patriotic displays and a live nine-piece band.

The event is open to the public, and especially all military service members and veterans, as well as spouses and families.

Attire for the ball is Sunday best, semi-formal, or formal, with many wearing their military

uniform or the uniform of a veteran's organization. Organizers request no casual street clothes.

Cost for the evening is \$30 per person, and attendance is by RSVP only.

Social hour and photos begin at 4:30 p.m., with dinner at 5:45 p.m. and dancing at 8 p.m.

Invitations were sent in the mail to those who attended the

ball in past years and others who had already signed up. For those who would like to attend, but are not yet on the invitation list, and for more information about the military ball, please contact Gary Buxengard at 21465 Southview Road, Spring Grove, MN 55974, call 507-498-3461, or email gnjlbux@springgrove.coop.

## Legion membership chart as of Feb. 20

District	2020 Goal	Total 2019	Total 2020	Weeks Gain	Total Posts	Goal Posts	% Of Goal	
District 1	8,149	8,091	7,568	51	58	11	92.87%	7,695
District 2	6,497	6,413	5,908	40	84	13	90.93%	6,122
District 3	11,021	10,956	10,299	65	65	15	93.45%	10,334
District 4	2,136	2,118	1,985	19	18	3	92.93%	2,020
District 5	2,346	2,325	2,030	38	23	3	86.53%	2,104
District 6	10,891	10,820	10,052	68	71	18	92.30%	10,308
District 7	5,778	5,702	5,290	42	76	12	91.55%	5,466
District 8	3,788	3,748	3,429	23	40	5	90.52%	3,527
District 9	6,124	6,059	5,618	63	65	14	91.74%	5,790
District 10	9,108	9,054	8,347	63	54	9	91.64%	8,520
District 11	3,655	1,897	1,808	24	2	0	49.47%	1,802
<b>Totals</b>	<b>69,493</b>	<b>67,183</b>	<b>62,334</b>	<b>496</b>	<b>556</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>89.70%</b>	<b>63,688</b>

Same Date Last Year

## Membership Rally is set for March 21

LA CRESCENT — The Appreciation Membership Rally happens March 21 in La Crescent.

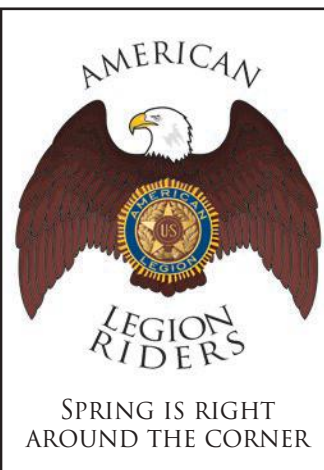
Social hour begins at 4:30 p.m., dinner at 5:30 p.m., program to follow.

Department Membership Director Sylvan Fix said he has rooms set aside at Best Western Plus, which is attached to the Event Center where the function takes place. The address is 595 Veterans Parkway, La Crescent.

Room rates are \$109 for double queen, \$99 for king, if you identify yourself as American Legion Post 595. (Hurry.) The dinner offers beef tips

with mushroom gravy, mashed potatoes, glazed carrots, green bean almondine, coleslaw, desert, buns, coffee, all for \$15. Contact Fix at 507-313-3376 or papafixone@gmail.com for reservations. The cutoff date is March 12.

The Department Executive Committee meets at 1:30 p.m. at the Event Center. The Rules Committee will meet immediately following.



SPRING IS RIGHT AROUND THE CORNER

## 2020 HISTORY MAKER CELEBRATION

Enjoy a Live WWII USO-Style Variety Show & Themed Dinner!

5:30 - 8:30 p.m. April 30, 2020  
Gorecki Center, College of St. Benedict, St. Joseph  
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Ticket sales and donations benefit the Stearns History Museum.

For tickets and more information visit: StearnsHistoryMuseum.org or call 320-253-8424.



235 33rd Ave S, St. Cloud, MN





Cpl. Rudolph E. Engstrom rests in a shell hole on Iwo Jima, holding a piece of shrapnel that wounded him. Sgt. Dave Christian of the U.S. Marine Corps took this photograph in black and white, and the United Kingdom's Richard James Molloy colorized it. The black-and-white version appeared at the end of the Clint Eastwood film "Flags of Our Fathers." In addition to being an American Legion member, Engstrom had a career as a vocational agriculture teacher and an FFA adviser in Lake City, Iowa. He died at 95 in September.

## My grandfather, wounded at the Battle of Iwo Jima, still inspires

I've decided to call my column "All-American" in honor of the 82nd Airborne Division and for The American Legion's pillar of Americanism.

The 82nd is nicknamed "All-American" because the initial formation in August 1917 had soldiers from all 48 states, which was uncommon back then. It is why the shoulder patch has that famous "AA" on it, and, I have to admit, I felt like an All-American to be part of that division in my Army days.

I served in the Persian Gulf War as a soldier with the 82nd Airborne. In fact, I was among the first wave of the division's paratroopers to the Middle East. You had months before deploying? I had hours.

Somehow the Air Force managed to land the plane at King Fahd International Airport, and we didn't need to jump out this time.

OK, OK, I know, I just angered all the Air Force people. Just kidding.

The Army and Air Force can be friendly rivals at times, but in the Army Airborne, we liked our Air Force friends. Without their "hard" work, we couldn't enjoy jumps or collect jump pay.

But the main reason I am proud of being a paratrooper is that my late grandfather, Rudolph Engstrom of Lake City, Iowa, was a paratrooper, too.

Why did he want to be a paratrooper? Extra pay, of course. He served in the 2nd Parachute Battalion with the Marines, and they were called paramarines. He went to boot camp and jump school at San Diego.

His unit went ashore — rather than jump — on the island of Choiseul in October 1943, with the intention of distracting the Japanese from a larger American attack on the island of Bougainville. They conducted raids all over Choiseul, documented in the book "Mission Raise Hell: The U.S. Marines on Choiseul October-November 1943" by James F. Christ. My grandpa is named in that book.

The Marines disbanded their parachute units, and Engstrom ended up in the new 5th Marine Division, which was among the ground units at the Battle of Iwo Jima.

Long ago, as kids, we would

### All-American

Tim Engstrom



see that Joe Rosenthal photo of the flag-raising on Mount Suribachi but not know much about it other than Grandpa had been in Iwo Jima. We would ask Grandpa, "Hey, how come you aren't in that photo?"

He would reply, "I was the one they selected to take the picture."

Pretty clever guy, huh?

The fact is, Cpl. Rudolph E. Engstrom was wounded on his third day on the island, Feb. 20, 1945. The Marine had taken shrapnel to his neck and was bleeding everywhere because the wound was close to his jugular vein.

A Navy corpsman treated him in a shell hole. He was holding a dressing to the wound to halt the bleeding when a Marine photographer, Sgt. Dave Christian, turned up. Grandpa held up the shrapnel that wounded him, and, click, his image remains among the iconic images of the battle.

Note that Grandpa, loyal to his training, cradles his M-1 rifle while waiting for a stretcher team to evacuate him.

Hollywood actor and director Clint Eastwood directed an excellent movie called "Flags of Our Fathers" about the Battle of



That's me walking with my parachute, reserve and rucksack after a jump at Fort Bragg.

Iwo Jima, released in 2006. During the closing credits, there are images from the battle, and the Dave Christian photo of my grandfather is among them.

Imagine being at the movie theater that summer and, unexpectedly, there is your grandpa up on the screen. It was quite an honor for our small-town family.

Let's not forget, he received the Purple Heart for his wound.

Grandpa Rudy recovered from the neck wound and was with Marines on a ship preparing for the invasion of Japan when the Japanese surrendered in August, then formerly in September. He went to Japan as part of the occupation before returning home to Swea City, Iowa.

There, he convinced Naomi Speicher, who had the nickname of Tootie, to marry him instead of some other guy partly with the logic that the other guy wasn't a Marine. She graduated from the Minneapolis College of Business and he from Iowa State University, and they settled along the Raccoon River outside of Lake City, Iowa, where he became a vocational agriculture teacher and FFA adviser, and she was a sales coordinator for Bowie Manufacturing.

Grandpa Rudy and Grandma Tootie remained married for 72 years. Both died in 2019, she in April and he in September. He was a member of The American Legion and she the Auxiliary. He was honored throughout Iowa for his role as an FFA adviser and launching a nonprofit to sell fruit as a fundraiser. She was on the Chamber of Commerce board and coined the phrase that still greets motorists when they enter town: "Lake City, Everything But a Lake."

They had five children, and I was the first grandchild.

Tim Engstrom is the director of communications for The American Legion Department of Minnesota.

### Continued from Page 5

orchestration of Allied forces to achieve victory in Europe. Smith, a man who enlisted as a private in the Indiana National Guard in 1911, was chief of staff for Gen. Dwight Eisenhower at Allied Headquarters.

The Twin Cities Civil War Roundtable is slated for March 17 at the Bloomington Event Center, Knights of Columbus, 1114 American Blvd. W., in Bloomington. Social hour at 5:45 p.m., followed by a dinner, with the speaker at 6:30 p.m. To become a member, contact Carol VanOrnum at info@tcwrt.com. This month, John Haymond talks about the Dakota War Trials of 1862.

The St. Croix River Valley Civil War Roundtable takes place March 23. Robert Fiedler plans to talk about "The Law and the Civil War." The meeting begins at 5:30 p.m. with a social hour, a buffet meal at 6 p.m., followed by the presentation at 7 p.m., at the Lowell Inn, 102 N. Second St., in Stillwater.

### Bowling alley reopens

DAYTON — Sundance Lanes, where the 73rd annual American Legion Bowling Tournament is slated to take place March 21 to April 18, closed.

And then, after renovations, it reopened under new ownership. The website sundancego-lfbowl.com no longer functions because the place's new website is sundanceentertainment.com.

Department Bowling

Secretary Cari Lamb said the tournament is looking good.

"We are almost completely full," Cari Lamb.

Bowling is hosted by Osseo Post 172. To sign up, contact Lamb at 612-968-4839

Lamb posts updates and pictures to the tournament's Facebook page. Just search for "The American Legion Bowling Tournament."

### Check out the crafts, antiques

NORTH ST. PAUL — A craft and antique market is slated for March 7 from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. at North St. Paul Post 39, 2678 E. Seventh Ave., North St. Paul.

As for food, there will be a bake sale, and the kitchen will be open.

Proceeds go toward Auxiliary programs. Want more information? Contact Betty at 651-777-5552.

### Vietnam War to be focus on March 29

BYRON — Byron Post 119 is hosting a program on March 29 called Vietnam War Commemoration.

A presidential proclamation has designated March 29 as a date on which America will commemorate the Vietnam War. The Byron Post is inviting District 1 Legionnaires and their families to attend its commemoration.

Doors open at 11:30 a.m. There will be a short program at noon followed by a lunch buffet, with fellowship continuing to 4:30 p.m. Space is limited to about 300 at any one time.

As part of the program, there will be a reading of all the District 1 servicemen who died in Vietnam and special recognition of two young men from Byron.

For planning purposes, Post 119 Commander Carl DeWaard asks for an RSVP by March 18. Please contact one of the program directors, Gordy Bishop, at 507-775-6871 or send an email to gg69goat@gmail.com.

The event will be at Johnny Mango's Event Center, 505 W. Frontage Road, Byron, adjacent to the Legion bar.

The buffet will have barbecue pulled-pork sandwiches, baked beans, coleslaw, fruit cocktail, vegetable beef soup, chili, dessert and a selection of beverages.

The cost is \$5 for veterans and family members, \$10 for the general public, kids 6-13 \$5 and kids under 6 free.

### Legal clinics planned

Free legal clinics for low-income veterans will be held in March, sponsored by MACV. For more information call 651-200-4750.

It is Tuesday, March 10, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., at the Minneapolis VA Medical Center's Flag Atrium Balcony Room.

Another is Thursday, March 5, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Anoka County Government Center.

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**"UNCOMMON VALOR WAS A COMMON VIRTUE"**

On February 19th, 1945, the United States Marine Corps landed on the beaches of Iwo Jima. The USMC would fight for the next 36 days. The battle was a victory for the United States but came at a cost of over 26,000 American casualties. The key to success was the impeccable leadership and the valor of the American troops. Fleet Admiral Chester Nimitz would go on to say, "Uncommon valor was a common virtue" at the Battle of Iwo Jima.

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**S**T. PAUL — The 1945 Battle of Manila resulted in the deaths of 16,665 Japanese, while the United States lost 1,010 men. It was a battle where civilians bore the brunt — an estimated 100,000 killed.

By the end, the smell of death lingered over the city, and it settled on the tongue.

“No amount of spitting,” recalled Major Chuck Henne, “could clear it away.”

James Scott, author of “Rampage: MacArthur, Yamashita and the Battle of Manila,” spoke at the Dr. Harold C. Deutsch World War II History Roundtable on Feb. 11 at the Minnesota History Center.

The Charleston, South Carolina, journalist shared excerpts from his book, with members of the Filipino community of the Twin Cities in attendance.

Cuba, Puerto Rico, Guam and the Philippines came under U.S. control in 1899 after victory in the Spanish-American War. Cuba was granted independence, but the other places remained U.S. territories.

Lt. Gen. Arthur MacArthur, father of Gen. Douglas MacArthur, helped capture Manila and served a military governor.

“The archipelago,” he told Congress in 1902, “is the finest group of islands in the world. Its strategic position is unexcelled by that of any other position on the globe.”

The U.S. government “realized Manila, which would serve as the nation’s front door to the business markets of China, India and Malaya, needed a facelift to help attract industry,” Scott said.

Leaders brought in famed architect and municipal planner Daniel Burnham, who helped oversee the remake of the National Mall and had roles shaping Chicago, San Francisco and Cleveland. Burnham saw great potential in Manila, with its natural resources, old Spanish churches and the ancient walled city of Intramuros at the heart of the city, built after Manila’s founding in 1571.

“Often called the Pearl of the Orient, the city boasted a great quality of life with department stores and social clubs, golf courses and swimming pools,” Scott said.

Calling it “a city within a park,” the *New York Times* in 1932 declared: “Manila is by far the most beautiful of all cities in the Orient.”

On the eve of World War II, Douglas MacArthur lived with his wife and 4-year-old son in the penthouse atop the luxurious Manila Hotel, Scott said. His life had been intertwined with the city. It was where his mother died, wife courted and son born.

On Dec. 7, 1941, the good life ended, Scott said, when the Japanese attacked Hawaii and the Philippines. To avoid a bloody battle in the capital, MacArthur declared Manila an open city and evacuated his forces to Bataan and the fortified island of Corregidor.

“For MacArthur, this was far more than just a strategic retreat. He was abandoning his home, forced to leave so fast the family did not have time

even to take down the Christmas tree,” Scott said.

Japanese troops rounded up thousands of American civilians — from doctors to carpenters — and interned them at the University of Santo Tomas. The captives turned the 50-acre campus into a small city, complete with crops and a school for 500 children. But it was cramped.

“If you want privacy,” read a sign in a bathroom, “close your eyes.”

MacArthur escaped Corregidor 77 days later under the cover of darkness in a torpedo boat with his family and staff. He left behind thousands of Filipino and American soldiers who would endure the Bataan Death March and years in POW camps.

Upon reaching Australia, he famously declared: “I shall return.”

The Japanese looted the city, left fields to rot and cut off supplies. Medicine vanished.

The days turned to years, and the economy collapsed. Beggars and thieves flooded the streets.

“Families unable to care for children went so far as to abandon them to orphanages or even sell them. Starvation, meanwhile, ran rampant, claiming as many as 500 souls a day,” Scott said.

The city’s population before 1941 had been over 600,000. It swelled to about 1 million during the war as Filipinos sought food and work.

MacArthur returned on Jan. 9, 1945, to Lingayen Gulf, where he readied for a 100-mile march south to Manila.

Gen. Tomoyuki Yamashita’s job was to bog down the U.S. forces. War Minister Hideki Tojo had kept Yamashita tied up in Manchuria, but with Tojo out after the fall of the Marianas, Yamashita was back and wanted to prove his military worth. He divided his army and sought a protracted battle in the jungles of Luzon.

But Rear Admiral Sanji Iwabuchi, who commanded the Manila Naval Defense Force, did not want to abandon the capital, despite Yamashita’s orders. Off Guadalcanal, Iwabuchi survived the sinking of his own ship — a disgrace. He saw Manila as a way to redeem himself. He had 17,000 soldiers and marines divided across northern, central and southern Manila.

He barricaded the insides of buildings with desks, chairs and bookcases. Corridors were staggered with dirt, and street corners had obstacles and booby traps.

MacArthur was convinced the Japanese would evacuate the city, Scott said, and had planned a liberation parade. After all, intelligence showed Yamashita intended to leave Manila, but the messages changed, showing the growing fortifications.

“Defeat is a bitter pill that the Japanese will not swallow,” one resident wrote in her diary. “Defeat is the one thing that can make them turn into beasts.”

American forces began their attack the evening of Feb. 3. The 37th Infantry and 1st Cavalry entered the city from the north, with the 37th crossing the Pasig near Malacanan Palace and driving toward the ancient walled citadel of Intramuros at the heart of the city. The 1st Cav crossed the river farther south and turned toward the bay.

The 11th Airborne came up from the south, cutting off the back door.

That night, the cavalrymen liberated Santo Tomas, and the starving captives feasted on rations while American troops spoiled children with candy.

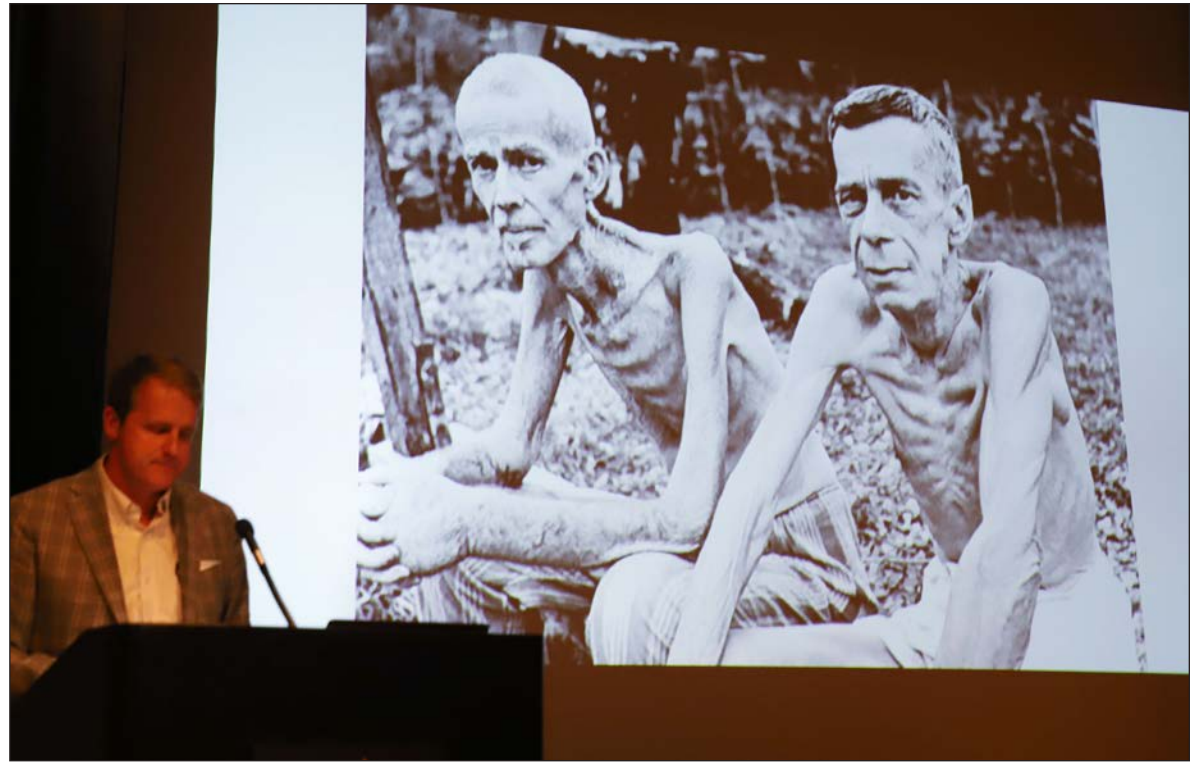
Also that night, Iwabuchi gave the order to destroy the city, and incendiary squads swept through districts to set fire to or even dynamite buildings. Bridges were blown.

“The spectacle was an appalling sight. The entire downtown section of the city was a mass of flames,” wrote Dusty Rhoades, MacArthur’s pilot, in his diary. “Flames were rising 200 feet in the air from the center of the city.” The Americans could only watch.

# ‘The merciful ones received a bullet’

The Battle of Manila was gruesome, especially for civilians

By Tim Engstrom



James Scott stands at the podium of 3M Auditorium at the Minnesota History Center on Feb. 11 in front of a photograph of Americans who endured captivity at the University of Santo Tomas in Manila.



James Scott is the author of “Rampage: MacArthur, Yamashita and the Battle of Manila.”

The Japanese fell back to the central city, and the Americans fought block by block, slowed by fortifications at street intersections and by fortified buildings. Japanese marines took to the higher floors to target advancing Americans.

“The preferred solution was to use cannons to blast the upper floors to rubble and then move in,” one infantry officer said. “An equally favored alternative was to burn the building. When these alternatives wouldn’t work, riflemen moved in to take the building floor by floor.”

Over the course of the battle, American forces would fire more than 42,000 artillery and mortar rounds.

The Manila residents sheltered in cramped basements and hideaways. Such places “proved easy prey for marauding Japanese troops, who often lobbed explosives inside,” Scott said.

Santo Tomas internee Robert Wygle described the parade of wounded who came to the university: “They are so far beyond recognition that, in many cases, one can’t tell whether they are men or women, boys or girls, dead or alive.”

Iwabuchi realized the fight was lost by Feb. 9.

“At that point, the fight took a very

evil turn,” Scott said, “devolving from a battle over one of Asia’s great cities into one of the worst human catastrophes of World War II.”

War crimes investigators tallied 27 major atrocities inside Manila alone, with hundreds more across the Philippines.

This included the Japanese tossing babies in the air, skewering them on bayonets, and decapitating hundreds with swords. Thousands were burned alive with fire or explosives.

“The merciful ones received a bullet,” Scott said.

Japanese troops raped hundreds of women. One recalled 12 to 15 times in a single night.

“I was so tired and horror stricken that it became a living nightmare,” one woman recalled.

Scott’s book describes horrors at the Red Cross, the German Club, St. Paul’s College, the Bay View Hotel, and on and on. Filipinos, Russians, Spaniards, Germans, Indians, rich, poor, senators, priests, doctors, celebrities, all murdered.

By Feb. 23, Iwabuchi’s forces were isolated inside Intramuros and a handful of nearby government buildings. An

American artillery barrage that morning blackened the sky, turning day to night. An hour later, troops moved into the walled city.

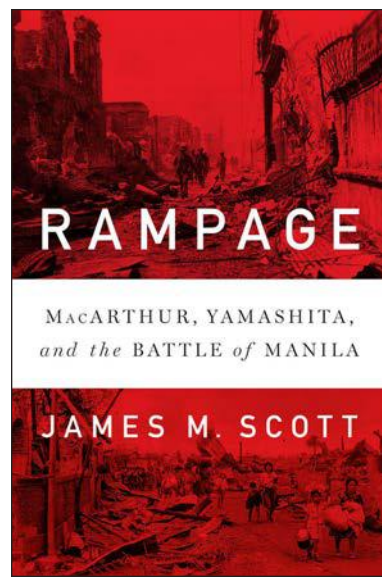
“The ensuing silence seemed even louder than the bombardment,” recalled one journalist.

Scott said the troops found the survivors were pretty much all women and children. Investigators determined the Japanese had killed 4,000 men inside Intramuros.

Imagine a building-by-building fight at the Capitol Complex in St. Paul. That’s essentially what happened in Manila. American forces blasted the Legislature, and it fell — literally — around noon Feb. 28.

Iwabuchi and his troops were in the Agriculture and Finance buildings. The final stand came down to the Agriculture building.

America’s guns pulverized the columns of the structure, exposing the rebar, Scott said, and Iwabuchi withered the onslaught. After telling his men to escape or taking their own lives, he retreated to his quarters and slit open his belly. Most of his men chose to die. Some surrendered. The battle ended March 3.



## WORLD WAR II



Bernerd "Bud" Benoit sits beside a flag at Wold-Chamberlain Post 99 in Minneapolis.

# An eyewitness to the Pacific Theater

'Bud' Benoit, who turns 100 years old this month, was at battles of Guadalcanal, Tarawa, Saipan, Tinian, Okinawa

By Tim Engstrom

**M**INNEAPOLIS — A witness to the Pacific Theater of World War II turned 100 years old around the time you are reading this issue of *The Minnesota Legionnaire*.

Bernerd Peter Benoit — better known as "Bud" — became a centenarian on March 3. He and his family enjoyed a birthday party at Wold-Chamberlain Post 99 in South Minneapolis.

The Purple Heart awardee is spry and talkative as just about anyone else, and listening to him is like reclining on a beach chair while watching American forces come ashore on island after island. He has firsthand experiences.

In order, he was on Guadalcanal, Tarawa, Saipan, Tinian and Okinawa. The worst? Tarawa.

"The Japanese had never lost a battle in 2,000 years," Benoit said. "We had to walk into their bullets, and our boats got caught on a coral reef. We should never have won that island."

He said the Japanese pushed the Marines back to 50 feet from the shore. It looked like all was lost until, suddenly,



the Japanese pulled back farther inland.

Benoit grew up in a tough Minneapolis neighborhood where Bernerd wasn't exactly manly sounding, so Bud worked well. It was the old Snoose Boulevard area — Cedar and Washington — before his family moved down to Franklin Avenue.

He never graduated high school. Instead, he got a job at 16 with Western Union.

"I was tired of being broke all my life," he said.

At 17, he went to work for the Civilian Conservation Corps, which was under supervision of the U.S. Army, and he put his muscles to work at Gooseberry Falls State Park. He got hurt, and as he recovered but couldn't leave, he began helping out at the medical outfit. He was asked to stay in that role.

Benoit's sister married a guy who had pinball and phonograph machines in Wisconsin, and Benoit took a route collecting the coins and checking their condition. The guy wanted him to take over the company, but then the war came.

He went home and got a job at McGlynn Bakery, first cleaning, then as a clerk, then head clerk. With a special truck and the ability to balance many trays, he delivered baked goods to several stores in Uptown and on the north side, he said.

On March 3, 1942 — at age 22 — he joined the Navy. Why? Well, the Army, he said, had a lot of people who had troubles of one sort or another, and the Marines sometimes entered combat

under the command of the Army, so the Navy sounded like a better plan.

He entered boot camp in San Diego, and then he was stationed there, going to sea on ships as the Navy worked to perfect radar.

In 1943, Benoit was drafted into the Marine Corps as a corpsman, he said. He had the only set of Marine Blues as a result of doing MP duty, so he spent time at ceremonies. Everyone else only had Greens. His uniforms are all now at a museum in New Ulm.

At Guadalcanal, he didn't see much of the six-month battle, just the last two months.

"It was pretty well secure, but we still lost some men during the landing," he said.

**A**t the Battle of Tarawa, his division, the 2nd Marines, were the only ones going ashore, and it was the first time American forces were facing resistance during an amphibious landing. The Marines had to dig in along the beach.

"Tarawa was so flat that you couldn't take a crap there," Benoit said.

Finally, the 6th Marines joined the fight.

"They were fresh. They went right through and the island was ours," he said.

On Tarawa, Benoit got in some hot water. He tripped on a dying man and told the battalion's chief surgeon he ought to be saving his life.

The surgeon ordered him to give a bottle of blood to the man in hopes that it would stabilize him. Benoit doesn't know whether that man lived or died, but the surgeon wanted to court-martial Benoit for questioning his decisions. There had been some serious off-the-record words exchanged, including the corpsman saying "Never get in front of my rifle."

Today, Benoit admits the doctor's duty was to mend soldiers so they could return to the fight, not address the worst first. And there was always a shortage of doctors.

He later learned a colonel who oversaw the surgeon protected Benoit from being court-martialed.

Still, Benoit was the corpsman for Dog Company and he avoided sending his injured men to HQ company, where the chief surgeon worked.

Also on Tarawa, he shot a Japanese soldier and recovered a special Japanese flag. It had a rising sun and sunrays but with a man and a woman making babies. He sold it for booze and beers, the drinking of which meant a lot to his buddies prior to the next landing.

The Battle of Saipan was the first on Japanese homeland. Most of the forces the Marines fought were born there, and they believed Americans would perform all kinds of atrocities on them if they lost. They were willing to kill themselves before surrendering, and Benoit saw parents send their children

off cliffs with themselves jumping after. Many Japanese soldiers performed hari-kari — ritual disembowelment.

"Very few surrendered," Benoit said. Before the battle, Benoit was pulled out of the division and placed into a unit of Raiders, which was to land ahead of the division. It was called off beforehand, and he returned to the 2nd Division.

Benoit was awarded the Purple Heart as a result of the battle. Artillery was called in and a short round fell near him and carried him through the air.

"I was breathing out of all orifices and placed on a dead pile," Benoit said.

The Marines found out he wasn't dead and took him to a field hospital. After recovering, he was forced to remain in the hospital against his will, so he just walked out and headed for his unit. He ended up listed as missing, and he wasn't officially listed as found until a month later before the battle of Tinian during an R&R camp. His mother was unsure whether her son was alive or dead.

At the Battle of Tinian, the Marines performed a feint, like they had on many islands, where one force receives the attention of the Japanese, while other forces land with little or no resistance on another shore. The value of the island was its long airstrip, which was the launching point for the atomic bomb attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

**I**n January 1945, he was drafted back into the Navy.

Finally, at the Battle of Okinawa, he was on a ship, where, because he was a 1st class petty officer and there was a shortage of doctors, he was in charge of the sick bay for a small vessel.

He left the Navy on Dec. 14, 1945, and returned to his bakery job in Minneapolis. He wasn't sleeping well and felt like he needed a new job, so he applied for a license to sell liquor. He opened the store, Family Circle, at 20th Avenue and Minnehaha Avenue.

He did that for six years, then worked in construction before he and a friend joined to purchase an oil station. He got married on Nov. 27, 1951, to Marvis Jobs. They had two sons and two daughters — Steve, Denise, Shellie and Jamie.

A friend wanted a liquor joint but couldn't get a license, so they joined to get one and opened Billy Bud's on Washington and Plymouth, right across from the labor temple. For the six years it was open, it was the scene of fights outside the door and gang-related activities.

He then became a painting contractor before entering a career in real estate. Finally, he managed the NCO Club at Fort Snelling before retiring. These days, Benoit lives at 49th Street and 31st Avenue.

He is the last surviving member of his Marine chapter.

## Doors to the St. Paul Armory open at 10 a.m., not sooner

Continued from Page 1

up being approved and signed into law.

That way, they can kill it without voting on it.

And that's what Veterans Day on the Hill aims to do: Make sure lawmakers don't drop the ball.

The DAV MN Foundation is offering a 50 percent reimbursement for American Legion, VFW or other organizations for the cost of providing busing to the Capitol Complex in St. Paul for Veterans Day on the Hill. Organizations that seek the

reimbursement cannot "pass the hat" or otherwise raise funds. The ride must be offered free of charge.

Contact the DAV MN at 651-291-1212 to get the reimbursement documents, preferably before March 20.

Veterans Day on the Hill is presented by the Commanders' Task Force, the United Veterans Legislative Council of Minnesota and the Minnesota Association of County Veterans Service Officers.

Doors open at 10 a.m. April 20 at the St. Paul Armory — and no sooner. DAV provides

a free catered lunch between 10:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. The veterans will gather outside the Veterans Service Building at 12:45 p.m. and march across the lawn to the Capitol. The Rally in the Rotunda commences at 1:30 p.m. and goes one hour.

Read more about who will be speaking in the April issue of *The Minnesota Legionnaire*.

The rally is a chance to let lawmakers hear the voice of veterans. Topics being pushed this year are:

- Making the surviving spouse's property tax exclusion transferable to new property

(helping to downsize without penalty).

- Removing the burden of property taxes from Legion, VFW, AmVets Post buildings.

- Reducing the cost of hunting, fishing and trapping licenses for disabled veterans.

- Expanding veterans treatment courts.

- Increasing hourly wage for personnel care attendants.

- Eliminating language about post-9/11 veterans in the veterans preference law to apply to all veterans.

- Increasing the state grant given to veteran service

organizations.

- Funding the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs and supporting its legislative initiatives.

Some of the MDVA initiatives are the same, but the others are:

- Fund staffing and efforts for preventing suicide among veterans (\$1 million 2020-21; \$1.2 for 2022-23).

- Fund \$3.17 million 2020-21 and \$6.33 2022-23 to fund 150 housing vouchers for veterans who do not qualify for HUD-VASH vouchers.

- Fund \$4.2 million via bonding for improving the safety and

security of the veterans homes

- Fund \$10.7 million via bonding for asset preservation. The MDVA has 64 buildings valued at \$311 million to maintain.

- Fund \$100,000 via bonding for a greenhouse at the Fergus Falls Veterans Home. The residents living there already have raised nearly \$100,000 for the project.

- Clarify language in the Minnesota G.I. Bill to avoid misuse.

- Authorize the MDVA to operate adult day care.

- Permit the MDVA to employ a public relations agency.

# 'We're just there to do the work'

Doug Bible was detachment adjutant for SAL for over 35 years

By Al Zdon

**S**T. CLOUD — Doug Bible has been involved in the Sons of the American Legion since he was a kid.

He served as national commander in 1986-87. He retired as adjutant of the Minnesota Detachment this past year after over 35 years of service.

And you might not guess from his quiet manner or his tendency to avoid the spotlight, but he may be the most powerful behind-the-scenes figure in the 365,000-member national organization.

Bible was born and raised in Waite Park where his dad, Daniel, was a commander of the Waite Park Silver Star Post.

The post was named after three World War I veterans who earned a Silver Star. One of them was Bible's grandfather, Paul, who also earned a Purple Heart and a Distinguished Service Cross. At one point in the war, Paul left his trench under heavy fire and rescued wounded comrades from another trench.

Doug Bible became an SAL member when the Waite Park squadron was chartered in 1966. He was 9 years old at the time.

"We were quite active at parades and community events."

There was no statewide SAL organization at the time, but when it got organized, Bible became active. "I ran for detachment commander in 1970, but I lost. I ran again in 1971, and I won. I was 14 years old. It was fairly common for our officers to be young people at that time."

The state structure continued to grow, and the districts were formed. There were about a thousand or 1,500 members at the time in Minnesota.

"We grew every year consistently since then. We reached 10,000 members in 2005 when Robert Bristo was commander."

Bible also became involved in the national organization, and has only missed two national conventions in his years of service. In 1973, he was elected National Vice Commander at age 16. "In those days, we didn't do much traveling. We kept in touch with others through the mail or by phone."

In 1983, he was elected national chaplain of the SAL at age 26. All this time he had been active at the national level, serving on committees and on the SAL's National Executive Committee.

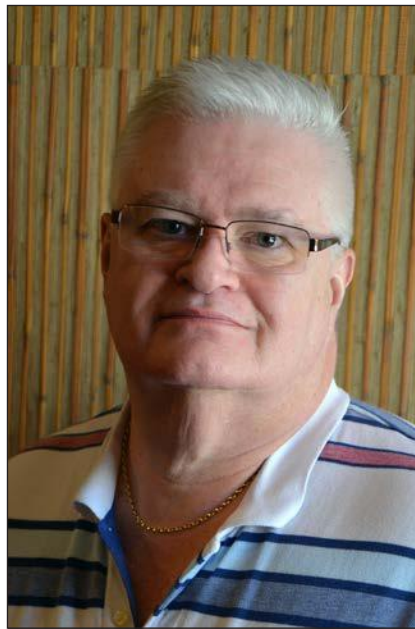
And in 1986, he was elected national commander of the Sons of the American Legion. "I was elected at the convention at Cincinnati, and at the end of the convention, I got engaged to Marsha."

He remembers a great year. "We were still pretty early on in our history. We had about 75,000 members. We didn't have a big budget, but we were growing."

**H**is commander's project that year was the Juvenile Diabetes Foundation, and when it came time to present the donation, it was one of the highlights of his year.

"They had a big event at Universal Studios in Hollywood, and they invited me out. It was live television. I got to present the check to Michael Landon and Gloria Loring. Later, at the party, I got to meet Bea Arthur and Betty White and many others. It was great. And the SAL got a bunch of good national press from the event."

Also during his year of leadership, the SAL gave its first check — for \$5,000 — to the Child Welfare Foundation, which in later years became the organization's primary project. The Child Welfare fund has now risen to \$8 million, and over \$250,000



Doug Bible

in grants are given each year to projects in the nation that help children.

"The CWF has really been our primary focus, along with the National Emergency Fund. We've really made a big impact year after year, and it's been great to see the success of the programs."

With his year over as national commander, Bible came back to Minnesota and took over the detachment adjutant job again, a position he held prior to his national service.

He also got married to Marsha in 1987. "Her father was also a commander and very involved in the Sons of the American Legion, and Marsha and I met at a luau in Hawaii at the national convention. They lived in Pittsburgh. We would see each other several times a year at national meetings."

Bible says his service with the SAL has been a major part of his life. "I've really enjoyed it. In the Legion Family, you make lifelong friends. There's such good camaraderie. I've enjoyed watching the SAL's role in the Legion grow through the years."

The Bible's son Geoffrey followed in his father's footsteps for many years, and, like his father, was elected National Chaplain in 2007. Doug says the door is always open for Geoffrey to seek higher office, but right now the younger Bible is busy enough as the deputy director of protocol for Georgetown University.

The elder Bible has remained very active at the national level, and is presently the chairman of the SAL's Commander's Advisory Committee. "Our main purpose is to choose upcoming national commanders. It's a similar role to what Minnesota's Dan Ludwig has on the Legion side."

The committee also advises the national commander, and has some input on national appointments. "There are people we want to watch in leadership positions."

Bible has been the chair of the committee for 10 years.

**O**n the home front, Bible retired last year after over 35 years as the state's adjutant.

"It got to the point where I was so busy with everything, I just needed to step back a little bit."

At the post, he still does bingo three days a week, as both the caller and the bookkeeper. "I've worked at the post for 46 years. I've done bingo. I've been a bartender. I've done a lot of different things."

"As detachment adjutant, I was most proud over the years to see the cooperation between the Legion and the Sons of the American Legion and the Auxiliary grow

year after year. I feel that the SAL is not just a little side item any more. The organization has recognized our participation. We're out there."

At the post level, as the age of the Legionnaires marches upward, the SAL has become increasingly important. "We do a great deal of the volunteer work. We help keep the Legion programs going, and they're so important."

"The best thing that's happened to the Sons of the American Legion is that we've expanded our horizons in so many different directions."

"We're involved in Boys State and Girls State. We support the great things the Legion and Auxiliary do. We don't need the publicity or recognition, we're just here to do the work."

The SAL was founded in 1932 when the Legion was something of a last man's club, and the idea was that the Sons could continue the organization as the World War I veterans became less involved. World War II and the influx of millions of new veterans into the Legion changed all that, and the SAL faded away until it started to catch fire again in the 1960s.

"We're now back to our original purpose, to carry on the great programs of the Legion at the Post level and at other levels. In the next 20 years, I can see that involvement only growing. I think we'll be a huge part in keeping the programs going."

Despite his retirement from his state position, Bible intends to remain active in Minnesota.

"Oh, I'll help out where I can. I can give suggestions. I can mentor the younger leaders in our organization. I may not be at the front table, but I'll be in the audience."

"It's been a wonderful part of my life. I have friends all over the country, and going to conventions is like a homecoming. Marsha has been so involved with the Auxiliary. We keep ourselves going that way."



## SAL Membership as of February 20, 2020

(Central Region) Richard M. Pfeiffer (IN)			
Detachment	Goal	Actual	Percent
WISCONSIN	3,744	3,442	91.934
IOWA	4,375	3,835	87.657
OHIO	31,133	25,573	82.141
ILLINOIS	14,546	11,689	80.359
MINNESOTA	11,748	9,286	79.043
INDIANA	39,364	30,753	78.125
MICHIGAN	24,083	17,581	73.002
MISSOURI	3,705	2,137	57.679
<b>Totals</b>	<b>132,698</b>	<b>104,296</b>	<b>78.597</b>

## The SAL Update:

### Spring Conference is taking place on March 13

Detachment commander

Dave Vulcan



Greetings from the Detachment of Minnesota Sons of The American Legion. I have been busy running to many Mid-Winter's and the Sweetheart Rally, and many others within the American Legion Family.

I would like to say thank you to everyone, all squadrons and individuals, who have donated to my project so far. We are doing good, but we have a way to go. Please consider donating to my projects. The Sons of The American Legion are doing excellent in membership. Let us get those renewals in before April!

We have currently renewed 74.74 percent of our membership from 2019.

Reminder that our Spring

Conference is set for March 13 and 14 in East Grand

Forks. Our special guest will be National Commander Clint Bolt. I look forward to having our national leader here in Minnesota.

Thanks to all of you for the hard work that the American Legion Family does to help everybody out. I am so proud of everyone. A big thumbs up and a big thank you from Commander Vulcan.

*Dave Vulcan is the commander of the Detachment of Minnesota for the Sons of The American Legion.*

## START 'EM YOUNG



From left are Detachment Commander Dave Vulcan; Hugh Hultgren, 6 months and new SAL member; James Hultgren, new SAL member; and SAL member Marlin Brandau. The three were at Osseo-Maple Grove Squadron 172.

# Listening Post

## Post 594 makes breakfast for veterans

EAGAN — The members of Eagan Post 594 have been cooking and preparing breakfast at the Fisher House next to the VA Hospital & Medical Center in Minneapolis since August 2019. Fisher House provides free room and board for families of patients receiving care at major military or VA medical centers.

At the onset of this initiative, Hy-Vee Eagan committed to providing Post 594 with gift cards to support the food purchases during the first three months of the program. The post is pleased to announce that Hy-Vee Eagan has committed to continued support of this program indefinitely.

“We really appreciate Hy-Vee partnering with us. Store leadership really cares about veterans and Hy-Vee is helping us make a difference for those families with loved ones in the



**Post 594 Legion members prepare breakfast for veterans at Fisher House.**

VA Hospital,” said Post 594 Commander John Flynn.

Fisher House management has informed Flynn that Post 594 is the first and only American Legion Post in Minnesota helping with meals at their site.

At this most recent feed, six Post 594 members participated: Cheryl Seanoa, Dan Seanoa, Joe Dolan, Pat Grinde, Stewart Fobes and Tom Mullon. Fisher House leadership and guests continue to express their sincere gratitude.

## SWEETHEART RALLY

Photos by Department Historian Mike Ash



**Districts 4 and 5 Vice Commander Teresa Ash and Legion Riders Liaison Chuck Stone. The Sweetheart Rally took place Feb. 8 at Montgomery Post 79.**

# Endorsements

## Larry Otto endorsed for Dept. chaplain

Larry H. Otto has been endorsed by Ellendale American Legion Fidelity Post 296 and the 1st District for the Minnesota state office of Chaplain.

Otto served in the U.S. Army from 1969 to 1971, stationed at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, and Fort Dix, New Jersey, and at Kelly Barracks in Stuttgart, Germany. He is a 48-year member of American Legion Post 296, having held most every office at his local Post, as well as, a member of the honor guard. Currently, he is Post commander and 1st District chaplain.

Otto has been active in his local community as a member of Clarks Grove Cooperative Creamery Board, FFA advisory board, Barbershop Society and a member of Steele County Historical Society.

Otto is also currently serving on the Community Foundation of Ellendale Board of Directors. In this position, he has been instrumental in co-leading renovation of the Ellendale Community Building project in cooperation with the City Council. Furthermore, as a member

of Ellendale United Methodist Church, he was a certified lay speaker, church council chairperson, trustee, staff pastor parish relations committee member, audio-visual chair and a member of the choir. In 2006, Otto was a key player in the construction of the new Ellendale United Methodist Church. For 25 years, he was a member of Praise Him, a group of eight adults who traveled throughout Minnesota, Iowa and Wisconsin.

Otto and his wife, Emily, have been married 48 years. Emily is a 70-year member of the American Legion Auxiliary. Both are retired, he from farming and construction and she from education. They have two children, Bethany and Josh, and seven grandchildren. Their oldest and only grandson is currently serving in the U.S. Army at Fort Bragg, North Carolina.

“Becoming the Minnesota Department chaplain is an office I would be honored to hold. It has been the one state office of which I most desire to attain,” he said.



**Larry Otto**

## Gary Weaver endorsed for vice cmdr.

Gittens-Leidel Post 595 of La Crescent proudly endorses Gary L. Weaver as a candidate for the position of Department 1st and 3rd vice commander. Gary is a U.S. Air Force veteran who served during the Vietnam era. Serving from 1973 to 1977, most of his time was spent at radar stations in North Dakota.

Gary is a 37-year PUFL member of Post 595 and served as commander in 1999/2000. He also served as sergeant-at-arms, 3rd District vice commander, 2nd District vice commander and 1st District vice commander. He is currently on his 24th year as adjutant and is also serving his 23rd year as Sons of The American Legion adviser. Gary can usually be found at any Post function or fundraiser.

At the District level, he has served as commander in 2010-11, Area 3 vice commander three times, Boy Scout chairman, Houston County commander, chaplain and is currently serving as historian. On the Department level, he has served as education chairman and is currently serving as the SAL adviser.

On the national level in October 2019, Gary was appointed to the National Americanism Council and is looking forward to serving in that capacity.

Gary is a member of the Rochester 237 Voiture Locale 40/8 and a 22-year dual member in the SAL, where he served as commander 2008-10 and is currently Squadron 595 adjutant. He is also a past District SAL commander 2000-01, as well as many other offices. He has also served as Detachment vice commander and historian.

In the community, he is a past scoutmaster for Boy Scout Troop 33 in La Crescent. He is a past director of the La Crescent Apple Fest, a current Apple Core member, and a drive for the La Crescent Apple Annie's. He was a chosen Apple Fest Man of the Year in 2006.

In his personal life, he retired from CenturyLink after 38 years. His son Tim is also active in the SAL, serving on the Squadron level as well as the District and Detachment levels.



**Gary Weaver**



**Emily Suess, president of the Auxiliary Juniors, addresses the gathering.**



**A strategic planning meeting takes place.**

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Hastings, MN 55033**

**Phone: 651-539-2486  
Fax: 651-480-0058**



These snowmobile riders look like they had a lot of fun.

## Veterans Appreciation Ride produced big smiles and thumbs up

TWO HARBORS — Each year for the last 13 years the Minnesota United Snowmobilers Association (MnUSA), Minnesota Education and Advancement Fund (MSEAF) and their clubs have organized a ride for veterans. Because one ride was canceled, this year's ride on

Jan. 11 was the 12th Veterans Appreciation Ride.

This year the ride had a fantastic turnout with 85 veterans participating along with 20 of their family and friends joining in as well.

Arranging and transporting sleds for that many can be a

challenge — but not in Minnesota. Between the snowmobile manufacturers, dealers and members there were enough sleds for those who needed them. Some vets had their own sleds — and some vets brought extra sleds for their fellow vets to ride.

Imagine all of the logistics for

the 90-mile ride. According to co-chairs Larry Shepherd and Terry Hutchison, volunteers were the key to success. Coordinating with the Voyagers Club and the Pequaywan Club, about 50 volunteers pitched in to make the Veterans Appreciation Ride another success.

All branches of service were represented on this ride. Everyone in attendance went home with a big smile on their face and gave many expressions of appreciation to the event organizers.

Nice job to MnUSA and MSEAF for saying thanks in their own way.

## Pizza, a state senator and the Greatest Generation

ROCHESTER — New Year's Eve — but during the day — had the owner of Rochester Pasquale's Pizza and state Sen. Carla Nelson of Rochester hosting a pizza celebration for the Greatest Generation — World War II veterans.

Ten veterans and their spouses or caregivers attended this event and for two hours wonderful stories were shared by these veterans.

Navy veteran Tom Perkovich joined and told stories about

being aboard the USS Hornet in the South Pacific in early 1945, when they came under a Japanese Kamikaze attacked.

In addition to joining The American Legion, he shared his impressions and thoughts on the events of the day.

Nelson is a longtime advocate for veterans matters at the Minnesota State Capitol, and she was joined by Wabasha County Commander Andru Peters, who sponsored Perkovich's new membership.



Navy veteran Thomas Perkovich, who just joined Lake City Post 110, chats with Wabasha County Commander Andru Peters and state Sen. Carla Nelson on Dec. 31.



Members of Kraft-Ostrom American Legion Post 142 had a very successful third annual packing event. With the help of the community, they are able to send 342 boxes to members of our military that have been deployed overseas. Commander Craig Hedstrom would like to thank everyone that made this year's event so successful.

## Cannon Falls gets packing

By Ricky Youngmark  
Cannon Falls Post 142

CANNON FALLS — Kraft-Ostrom American Legion Post 142 packed 342 boxes to send to deployed military along with the help of the community of Cannon Falls and surrounding areas.

The community donated items to pack boxes for our deployed military overseas through collection boxes placed in businesses and a drop off point at the VFW/American Legion Post in Cannon Falls.

Donations included personal

items, snack items, candy, cookies and letters to encourage our soldiers. Not only did the donations fill the lower level of the VFW/American Legion building, but then the volunteers began to come. There were individuals, school groups, business groups and Boy Scouts that came.

Packing began at noon and by 12:34 p.m., it was finished, 342 boxes to remind our soldiers of a little bit of home.

"I can't believe how fast all the packing went," said Post Commander Craig Hedstrom. "It is unbelievable!"

BSA Troop 232 Leader Jim Mosser brought a few of his Boy Scouts down to pack because of his own experience when he was

stationed overseas. "I received a box when I was deployed overseas addressed to any soldier. I know how much it means to get a little something from home," he said.

Josie Ehlers came to help because she received a box last year. A member of the Army National Guard, she was stationed in Kuwait. "I wanted to pay it forward," she explained.

There were many families, couples and individuals who contributed as well as groups from Cannon Falls Schools, Randolph Schools and Boy Scouts of America Troop 39. Local businesses that donated food items to help support the event were Nick's Diner, King's Place Bar & Grill, Family Fare

and Hi-Quality Bakery.

"This is truly a community event," said Commander Hedstrom. "We wouldn't be able to do this without them."

Saturday marked the third annual event for the Post.

Hedstrom said members of the post were brainstorming about doing something that the community could be involved with and the idea of packing boxes for deployed military came up.

"The first year we hoped to pack 30-40 boxes," he said. "We wound up sending 93 boxes the first year and 293 boxes last year. We found that the volunteers that came to pack the boxes were very proud of being connected to the soldiers that we

were packing the boxes for."

This year 342 boxes were packed for shipping.

"I can't thank the community enough for everything they did to support this event for our military. We placed donation boxes throughout the community and they were filled. "It was amazing to see how many turned out to pack boxes and how fast the packing went. Last year we were here until 3 or 4 p.m. With all the help this year, the packing went so fast," said Hedstrom.

The Legion plans to continue to make this an annual event to be held in January each year and is already discussing how we can make this event even better next year.



District 2 hosted speakers on veterans topics in Slayton.

## Idea: Invite them to you

SLAYTON — Speakers at the 2nd District Public Relations/Community event Feb. 22 in Slayton, at the 4-H Building were: Tim Burley and Rebecca Kaas, MPA, MSL, disabled veterans outreach program specialist, with the Department of Labor Career Force, Marshall office.

Slayton was the place to be on Feb. 22. A whole lot of heart and preparation went into this event. "Success" will take participation on everyone's part, even those that were invited to be there from the surrounding area and sister District.

Something new and different to bring us all into a spectrum of a better understanding of completion of "Our Mission"

We hope you will think about what you see and hear, to help us take The American Legion further into the Public's Eye, so it makes others want to be a part of what we do. Today is just a beginning to build on "Our Future." Communication or the lack of it, will decide our future. Help us, help others and we, The American Legion Family, will lead the way.

## A conference just for women veterans is set

MOUNDS VIEW — The 2020 Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs Women Veteran Conference will take place 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, April 4.

The event happens at the YMCA in Mounds View, at 5394 Edgewood Drive. The building also is the Mounds View Community Center.

The keynote speaker is Keara Torkelson, survivor of the 2009 Fort Hood shooting.

Breakfast and lunch will be provided.

The Minnesota Woman Veteran of the Year Awards will be presented. The Minnesota Quilts of Valor Foundation will make a presentation.

Plus, there will be a resource fair, assistance with benefits, yoga, massages and workshops on topics such as Clothesline Project, Veteran Farming Initiative and a session with Minnesota's women generals.

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# District commanders

## 1st District Dale Wellik



Greetings from the mighty 1st District American Legion Family.

What a great honor and privilege we had this week to have National Commander James W. Bill Oxford in the District for a day visiting Posts and picture taking and visiting with all that attended. The Posts did a wonderful job with the honor guards greeting him upon arrival, the meals and all accommodations. *Thank you!*

Membership is still going strong, and there are still eligible veterans out there to ask to join, just ask. Put on a membership night — burgers, tacos, soup and sandwich. Have the county veteran service officer

come in and talk about the benefits of the VA. Get your ID cards. Get signed up for your medical benefits through the county VSO before they are needed.

Continue to pray for our deployed troops that are defending our country and our freedom. Their families also need our prayers and support.

Do what is necessary to help these families through these times.

Thank you for your service, and support.

*For God and country.*

## 2nd District Brad Pagel



And they told me the news, I tried all night not to break down and cry. As the tears rolled down my face, I felt so cold and empty, like a lost soul out of place. And the mirror, mirror on the wall sees my smile; it fades again.

This is what happens to the younger veterans that have the passion and desire to lead an organization when they are continuously denied. They lose the passion that once was there and ask each other why do we even belong to an organization that does not appreciate our ideas and wants to keep the status quo.

The status quo is not the answer anymore. If you want to survive and be a driving force in your communities, new ideas and technology are found among the next generation of leaders. The young veterans have the means and capabilities to lead

this great organization. All generations have had a chance to make things better. Now it's the younger veterans turn to take the driving force of this organization into the future.

And it just makes me wonder, Why so many lose, so few win? And give me something to believe in. It's not a competition on how many years in a position. It should be about the future of the veterans we are fighting for, to make sure there is a future for them.

Ask yourself this, the position I have within the organization, or the hat I wear, am I doing anything for the betterment of the veterans, children and youth, my community?

*Still Serving America.*

## 3rd District Linda Dvorak



Hello from the 3rd District. Although I believe that we are doing a much better job at our messaging, I just want to relay something I heard lately. A younger veteran that is getting ready to retire after serving 20 years (that's younger in my book) in the National Guard and serving more than one tour in Iraq/Afghanistan mentioned that he went into a VFW/Legion club and was immediately asked what he was doing there by the "old" guys at the bar.

They told him he didn't serve in a real service or a real war. Needless to say this guy left the club, never to return again.

Seriously!  
I also ran into someone I used to work with who recent-

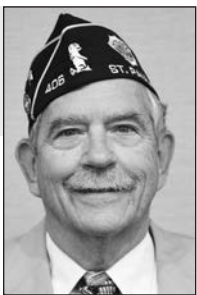
ly retired from the military and she went into a Legion club in the town she moved to and tried to become a member; no one was there to "verify" that she was eligible. She also left and has not returned.

These are just two examples, both within a week.

Did you make it to see the national commander when he was in Minnesota? I am always impressed at the commitment that the national commander has. They are away from home 350-360 days out of their year as national commander.

Until next month.

## 4th District Joe Jansen



Fellow legionnaires; We had a very nice rally in Montgomery in February attended by the whole Legion family from 4th District Auxiliary, SAL, Riders. Never having been to Montgom-

ery before, I am very happy to say — what a welcome-

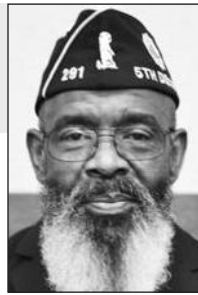
ing feeling was shown by both the Post and town.

We have another event coming up the Appreciation Social (rally) in La Crescent on March 21. I am asking all posts in 4th District to send a representative to the monthly RCCC meetings. They are held to help us (the Department, District and Posts) to inform our members of events in the cities, state and nation that impact on veterans. How are we going to help our

fellow veterans if we fail to communicate? I do my best to run a short meeting, with a light meal, and get you out of there by 8:15 p.m. The next RCCC meeting will be at Arcade Phalen Post 577 in St. Paul at 7 p.m.

I take my duty seriously when I raised my hand and was sworn in as your District Commander, so please help me help our members of the 4th District Family. We the officers of the 4th District can't do it alone.

## 5th District Andrew Rose Sr.



We didn't fare well with membership at the Sweetheart Rally. We have a chance to fix this at the Family Appreciation Rally on March 21.

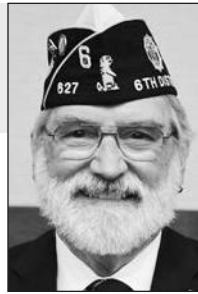
Our next 5th District assembly will be held April 7 at V.L. Giant Valley Post 234, 3751 Minnehaha Ave. S., Minneapolis. Phone number is 612-729-6824. It is hosted by Richfield Post 435.

Our Commander's Project is Every Third Saturday. Tom

McKenna at 952-356-5116 or tom@everythirdsat-urday. Your support is very important to the veterans and their families.

Our veterans convalescing at home, in private care facilities and hospitals are waiting to hear from you. Or for a visit.

## 6th District Paul Edwards



Happy Almost Spring to Minnesota.

This has been a whirlwind of a month — Sweetheart Rally, District Midwinter Conference, a visit with the National Commander and this coming weekend, a visit with the 6th District Junior Auxiliary.

According to the latest membership report, we are still in fourth place. As a district, we are already above the 90 percent goal for March 11. I am happy that we have 18 Posts that are at their goal or higher, and we now have 10 Posts that have qualified for the National Commander's 103 Percent Award. Well done!

I will be completing the paperwork for the three additional Posts and submitting it to the adjutant at the Appreciation Rally in March. Keep on keeping on in the push for membership.

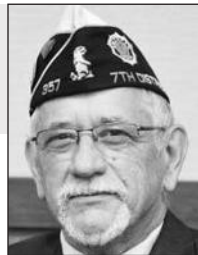
One last thought before I close this note. Legion membership is

not a spectator sport. It requires all us to be as actively involved as we possibly can to support the Legion and its programs.

I understand travel for work, odd shifts, weekend overtime and family events all come into play where Legion participation is concerned. Despite that, I encourage everyone to try to be more involved at every level of the Legion. The American Legion needs you, your ideas, your knowledge and the wisdom you have earned by experience. Please be as active in your Post, your District and in our Department as you possibly can.

"Do what you can, with what you have, where you are." — *Teddy Roosevelt*  
Until next month.

## 7th District Dean Knutson



There are many times as we travel around our Districts that we forget to talk about the things that are of utmost importance to The American Legion, and by that I mean that we need to continually talk about the Four Pillars on which The American Legion was founded on.

We need to continue our efforts to work for the better for the good of all veterans as far as Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation goes. What are we doing to spread the work of the Americanism Program within our communities? What are we doing as far as getting the word out to the

new members of the armed forces about the good of the American Legion about our support of a strong national security and how are we encouraging our children and youth to honor your flag and support our great nation?

The American Legion has celebrated over 100 years in existence and we need to do what we can to keep The American Legion as a strong voice for all veterans. Happy birthday to The American Legion!

## 8th District Anne Koskinen



We had an interesting 8th District Winter Conference at Veterans On The Lake Resort.

Reminder: The resort is always there for veterans to rent. For us Marines, General P. X. Kelley, 28th commandant of the Marine Corps, was laid to rest in Arlington in mid-February. A great man, a great leader, and a great Marine. RIP.

This is the 75th Anniversary of the Battle of Iwo Jima, Feb. 19, into late March. Many of us had relatives in that battle and we salute those who gave their all to capture that island.

Following up to report that 104-year-old USMC Maj. Bill White (ret.) received over 300 thousand cards, gifts and letters in Operation Valentine. What a show of love and appreciation!

We have formed an ad-hoc bylaws committee to review our District bylaws for revisions necessary to update them to present, and make changes to represent

the present needs of our District. Tentatively, we are going to meet in April so that we can get the changes to the membership in the May newsletter (30 days minimum before voting on them at convention). If you are interested, contact me, or your local Post for details.

Please be active in your community and also attend local Post meetings. I urge Legionnaires to take on work on District committees, as chair or just be a member to help out. We can sort this out at District Convention on June 6 in Hibbing, or contact someone by going onto the District website.

Please follow The American Legion Twitter feed @AmericanLegion. Comment on their posts so the leadership gets your thoughts registered.

## 9th District Lowell Philp



Rep. Bob Dettmer sent a request to Adjutant Mike Maxa for information on Post homes owned, no Post and other meeting places. He is using this information for bills HF3049 and HF3050. By doing this maybe we can get tax credits for the buildings, places or businesses we use on the POR form.

It would be nice to have a list of Post homes, not just a question check Yes or No (located on the upper right hand corner of POD form), along with a list of other meeting places. That information would significantly help the findings of the report and the American Legion Family.

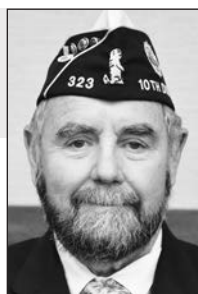
On Saturday, March 14, St. Patrick's Day at the Fergus Falls Veterans Home is our day of letting the veterans know *we haven't forgotten.*

The American Legion Family will make doughnuts starting at 8:30 a.m., followed by a short get-together and a lunch. We will then meet in the lunch room proceed with introductions and serve cookies, doughnuts and ice cream to all the veterans. This function not only brings joy and a warm feeling to our American Legion Family, it's also greatly appreciated by the residents of the Veterans Home.

If you would like to participate in this heartfelt event, please contact:

Lowell D. Philp, 9th District commander, at 218-368-2365 or minnfats@yahoo.com.

## 10th District Tom Allen



Legion Family, I sit here trying to think what to put in this letter. Yes, I got my sweetie some flowers. (She's also my wife.) Looking outside — 15 below, snow and ice, me hoping the truck will start so I can go have coffee at the local coffee shop — I keep thinking of the letter that was read at the SAL meeting last night.

A veteran overseas got a care package. She is in the Air Force and was six months away from home. It tells how she felt all alone like they no longer existed. All her days seemed so dark and her loved ones were back here, and not being able to see them, hold them or take them shopping or to dinner.

The care package was full of snacks. When she opened it, she wanted to devour all of it at once. She then remembered

the rest of her group and how they were her family over there. She then shared it with them. They were family from all over the United States.

She couldn't believe that someone who hasn't ever seen her or knew her would send her that package.

That small package was very large to all the service members with whom she shared it. In the past, I have helped put packages together, but I didn't realize what it meant to the ones receiving the packages.

So as I sit here looking outside at the cold and snow in a warm house, it's a beautiful day.

God bless our veterans, and God bless you.



# The Auxiliary Bulletin

No. 20 Vol. 8

President Mary Hendrickson • Secretary Sandie Deutsch

Dept. HQ: Veterans Service Building, St. Paul, MN 55155

651-224-7634

March 2020

## It's an honor to have National officers pay visits

### President's Column

Mary Hendrickson



March is shaping up to be a very busy month. The weather is heating up and so is my calendar. I'm looking forward to the March 8 Leadership Workshop at the Forest Lake Post. It's being led by our 2nd Vice President and Leadership Chairman Mary Kuperus.

I've been attending Auxiliary meetings and conventions since I was a small child. Nevertheless, I always learn something new or gain new energy from what I learn at a leadership workshop. Mary has scheduled several workshops, so please consider attending one of them.

On March 21, the American Legion Family is having its annual Appreciation Rally at La Crescent. There will also be a Department Executive Committee Meeting that day. Let's hope for good weather and a big turnout of American Legion Family members.

Following the rally, Carl and I are taking a few days off in Laughlin, Nevada. I'm going to walk along the Colorado River and refresh my mind before the remaining four months of my term. Carl is thinking "golf," so we'll see what happens out there.

Looking backward, February was a fun and active month. The first stop was the Feb. 1 6th District Mid-Winter Meeting at Little Falls. This was followed by two roundtrips to Montgomery in one week!

Our Sweetheart Rally was well-attended. The food and camaraderie were excellent. I appreciated the midday rally, so we had a few hours of travel in light on the way home. Six days later, Carl and I had great fun at the Montgomery Valentine's Day Dinner. Post members had wine and cheese, decorated the tables, served a wonderful meal to the Auxiliary members present and even had door prizes. This type of service I could really get used to!

As I'm writing this column, I'm just back from the National Commander's Tour banquet

in New Prague. This was a special evening. It's always an honor to have a national officer visit our Department. There was a wonderful turnout of American Legion Family members and the usual excellent meal prepared by New Prague Post 45.

National Commander Bill Oxford from the Department of North Carolina gave an interesting talk on his travels throughout the U.S. and internationally, as well as inspiring all of us with his projects on child welfare and veterans helping veterans.

Speaking of national visits, National American Legion Auxiliary President Nicole Clapp will visit Minnesota during April 6-8.

President Nicole hails from the neighboring state of Iowa. Those of us traveling with her are anxious to show her the Serviceman's Center at the Minneapolis/St. Paul Airport, the Brain Science Center at the University of Minnesota, Hastings Veterans Home, the Minneapolis Veterans Home and the St. Cloud VA Medical Center.

Nicole spent many years in the medical field. We can be very proud of the services we offer to veterans in Minnesota. Please check the luncheons and dinners being held in her honor during the three-day visit and plan on joining us for one of the meals. The stops and contact information are listed in this edition of the Legionnaire.

Once again, thank you for all the invitations and contributions to my project. In this our centennial year, I appreciate all you do to "Remember, Honor, Serve" our veterans, active duty military and their families.

*Mary Hendrickson is the president of the American Legion Auxiliary Department of Minnesota.*

## National President's Tour

Date	Stop	To Make Reservations
Apr 6	Pine Island 184, dinner at 5 p.m.	Linda Kelly: 507-421-8270 by March 27
Apr 7	Rosetown 542, lunch at 11:30 a.m. Osseo 172, dinner at 6 p.m.	Sandra Gibson: 651-636-3899 by Apr 3 Cathy Thornhill: 763-424-5329 by March 30
Apr 8	Waite Park 428, lunch at noon Forest Lake 225, dinner at 5:30 p.m.	Karen Foss: 320-230-4876 or rkfoss@icloud.com Cavalene Regan: 612-867-4248, call or text

## Make reservations for tour

National President Nicole Clapp of Iowa will visit Minnesota from April 6 to 8.

Department President Mary Hendrickson, NEC Raleen Tolzmann, Membership Director Sharon Thiemecke and Department Secretary Sandie Deutsch will be touring parts of Minnesota, visiting Units, Veterans Homes and Camp Ripley.

Above, in the box, is a brief itinerary of stops.

We will also visit the new Armed Forces Center, Hastings Veterans Home, Minneapolis VAHCS Brain Science and the St. Cloud VAHCS. Please make your reservations now. Let's fill our American Legion Posts that are so generous in opening their doors for our tour.

### State Junior Conference to be at Waite Park Post 428

Saturday, April 18, is the date for the 57th annual Department Junior Conference. It will be held at Waite Park American Legion Post 428 with the 6th District serving as hosts. A fun evening has been planned for Friday, April 17.

Complete information and the Call to the Junior Conference was included in the January/February Unit mailing. Be sure you share this information with your Junior activities chairman. Make arrangements for your Juniors to attend.

We need more Juniors to attend our Conference and share their successes with other Junior members so we can grow the program. Junior members are the Auxiliary's future, and we must nurture and promote what they do.

Department Honorary Junior President Emily Suess has done a fantastic job leading our Juniors this past year.

### Department President Mary Hendrickson's Testimonial Dinner

The West Duluth American Legion Auxiliary Unit 71 will host a Testimonial Dinner for Department President Mary Hendrickson on Saturday, April 25, at the West Duluth American Legion Post 71.

The cost of the "Toast and Roast" is \$15 a ticket. Make your checks payable



Savage American Legion Auxiliary members loaded up the van and delivered winter clothing, books, toiletries, backpacks, 300 signed holiday cards, calendars, cans of coffee and baby wipes. All were delivered on Dec. 11 to the VA Hospital, VA Nursing Home and VA Adult Day Center in Minneapolis.

to West Duluth Unit 71 and mail them to Susan Korhonen, 20 Village Dr. Unit 101, Proctor, MN 55810 by April 20. Mary has been a phenomenal president representing our organization this year, and we all need to attend to show our support and gratitude.

### Get your orders for poppies 2020

Poppy time is fast approaching. To date, 278 out of 438 Units have ordered their 2019 small and/or large poppies. To the remaining 152 units, please place your orders now.

Keep in mind who assembles these poppies. They are made by our veterans, many of which have disabilities. If the poppies you receive aren't as perfect as you would like, remember where they came from. Let people know who assembles these — I think you would be surprised at how many individuals don't know.

### Minnesota Girls State

Remember your application for reservation and your \$300 registration fee must be received by March 31st to reserve a place for your American Legion Auxiliary Minnesota Girls State citizen. If your Unit has not yet sent this in, please take care of it immediately. Reservations with

the payment of the \$300 registration fee for each candidate will be accepted on a "first-come-first served" basis.

Upon processing your Unit's reservation fee you will receive the necessary registration packet for each citizen you are sponsoring. American Legion Auxiliary Minnesota Girls State can accommodate 445 citizens.

A Unit may send as many young women to American Legion Auxiliary Girls State as they wish to. The candidate must be a Minnesota resident, attend a Minnesota school or home school.

The 2020 session of American Legion Auxiliary Minnesota Girls State will be held at Bethel University in St. Paul, June 14-20. We look forward to the 74th annual American Legion Auxiliary Minnesota Girls State week and another educational and successful session.

### Scholarships

Applications for all scholarships awarded by the Department are due by March 15th. Announcement of the recipients will appear in this column when the judging is completed. Make sure and follow all of the rules on the application. We don't want our students disqualified because something isn't signed.

### Feb. 19, 2020, Membership:

District	Goal	Membership To Date	Percent of Goal	Membership Last Year 2/20/19
One	4,177	3,687	88.27%	3,717
Two	4,191	3,736	89.14%	3,711
Three	4,064	3,594	88.44%	3,554
Four	624	541	86.70%	542
Five	603	528	87.56%	517
Six	5,393	4,759	88.24%	4,834
Seven	3,369	2,938	87.21%	3,001
Eight	1,363	1,175	86.21%	1,162
Nine	3,618	3,147	86.98%	3,287
Ten	4,304	3,710	86.20%	3,766
1982	178	188	105.62%	164
Totals	31,884	28,003	87.83%	28,255



Villard Unit 175 Auxiliary members celebrated the 100th Anniversary of the American Legion Auxiliary at a dinner provided by the Villard Post 175 on November 18, 2019 at the Villard Community Center.

# Auxiliary Unit helps out female homeless veterans

Eagan American Legion Auxiliary Unit 594, with the support of Hy-Vee Eagan, is collecting used handbags, string backpacks and zippered cloth bags for homeless veterans.

The project is Purses with Purpose. It will focus on supplying homeless veterans, women and men with personal hygiene supplies.

"I learned at the 2019 National American Legion Convention in Indianapolis that female homeless veterans, though fewer in number than homeless male veterans, have more difficulty taking care of themselves," stated ALA Eagan Unit President Susan Flynn. "Often the female homeless veteran has been sexually traumatized while they were in the military and so when they separate from their service they often distance themselves from the VA, leaving benefits they should be applying for untouched. They may not want anything to do with the VA but they still need help."

With grants from the Eagan Walmart, Burnsville Walmart and Eagan Sam's Club, the Auxiliary Unit has initial funding to reach out and help where they can. The Community Resource and Referral Center, which works with homeless veterans in



Susan Flynn of Eagan Unit 594, right, delivers the goods.

Minneapolis, will help them reach out once the bags are collected and filled.

Though spring is coming it is still difficult for the homeless to survive outside.

"We hope to ease veterans suffering. After all, they served our country and now it is time for us to serve them," President Flynn added.

# Make sure to get involved with your community

The American Legion Auxiliary Community Service program promotes visibility within our localities through our commitment to community, state and nation.

The Community Service program also promotes and follows the American Legion Auxiliary Mission to take care of veterans, active duty service members and their families. We are all asked to continue to promote the community service mission and the programs within our local unit and within our communities.

Another part of the American Legion Auxiliary Community Service program is to promote our visibility outside in our communities. We need to remember to wear our American Legion Auxiliary apparel and pins.

We have been hearing a lot about "branding" for the American Legion Auxiliary in the last few years, that means we need

to be seen!

### Ideas

Member — reach out to local ministers and first responders to be a designated responder for veteran families in need. Be sure to keep a list of veteran resources handy so you will be ready.

Get involved with your neighbors and those outside our Legion Family by volunteering at your local library, food pantry, domestic violence shelter, senior citizen centers, assisted living centers, nursing homes.

Represent the Auxiliary as a member of local community boards and committees. You can volunteer at your local meals on wheels program.

Units — volunteer to organize or assist with your community's Veterans Day observance. Organize and participate in service projects for veterans, service-members, their families and

## Community Service

Diane Hayes



local community programs on ALA suggested days of service.

Register service projects on websites, community forums and social media to attract other community members to participate in your service projects.

Volunteer for local service projects and causes (walks, special events, etc.). Work with your post home to offer space and their participation in local service projects and causes.

Sponsor and participate in activities at local libraries, senior citizen centers, assisted living centers, nursing homes, service projects and causes (walks, special events, etc.). Attend and represent the American Legion Auxiliary at special celebration

events in the community such as holiday parades, festival parades, grand openings of community facilities and community leader recognition ceremonies.

The American Legion Auxiliary Community Service program is all about working together and making a difference for our veterans, their families and our communities.

Diane Hayes is the community service chairperson for the American Legion Auxiliary Department of Minnesota.

## Secretary's Notes

Sandie Deutsch



Well gang, time is flying and I am getting very excited and sad at the same time. Our new grandson is due the first of May and my retirement is only 5 months away — that is the exciting part. The sad part is knowing each of the upcoming events will be my last as your Executive Secretary. The friendships I have made throughout the last 9 years are endless and I will continue to hold each and every one of you in my heart. When I started all of the conferences, conventions and meetings were so "stuff shirted." I can't function like that. To the entire American Legion Family I want to sincerely thank you for allowing "fun" into what we do and going on my ride with me. I am now an official Ordained Minister, even got the official name badge. Who would have ever thought that? My poor grandmother is probably shaking her head while looking down upon me. I just can't wait to try

out my "sermon" on Bill and Donna — you two asked for it. My shout out this month goes to the best staff in the whole wide world. I have managed many, many people in my career but Jan and Jocelyn are the best ever. The little hole Julie created by leaving left me scratching my head but Jocelyn filled that hole in a big hurry. I will miss those two the most. I am not done yet so you will have to put up with me for a few more issues. Happy St. Patrick's Day and congratulations to my dear friend Don Hayden and his wife Mary as being named the St. Patrick's Day Grand Marshals in Le Center. You're buying Don!!

Sandie Deutsch is the executive secretary for the American Legion Department of Minnesota.

## Celebration of Life planned for Vicki Scardina Bibeau

There will be a Celebration of Life for Vicki Scardina Bibeau on Easter weekend at 1 p.m. Saturday, April 11, at the Spenser-Ross American Legion Post 134 in Walker, 407 Front St.

All American Legion

Auxiliary members from throughout the Department of Minnesota and beyond are invited to participate in a poppy ceremony.

For more, contact Dee Dee Buckley at 651-278-4355 or Norma Tramm at 320-685-8510.

### Come and get them

A new supply of the emblem magnets are for sale at the price of \$5 each. They are available at the Department office in St. Paul.

## WHERE THE WILD THINGS ARE



Sandie Deutsch was invited to attend the Salute to Hospitalized Veterans Day at the Minneapolis VAHCS. It was a Valentines Party for the Veterans with many celebrities on hand. Attendees went to the Veterans rooms and presented each one with a blanket, cap and a homemade Valentines card. One of the celebrities whom the Veterans really enjoyed visiting with was retired Minnesota Wild star Wes Walz.

## Guess what? Annual reports!

Yes, indeed, it is that time of year again. All Units should be preparing their reports covering the time period April 1, 2019, to March 31, 2020.

The Department copy of all reports must be mailed to the Department office on or before April 15.

Please mail one copy to your District president and keep one for your records. No matter how much or how little your Unit has been able to contribute in time, energy, resources and talent to our programs, it is important that everything be included in your reports.

Your reports make up our Department and National reports. You have all received your forms.

Let's have a 100 percent turn-in this year.

## Calendar of veterans sold well

Carolyn Ross of Cass Lake Unit 284 stated that a community project that was started in 2019 was so popular that they did it again in 2020. They have developed a calendar that features veterans from the Cass Lake area.

There is no duplication of pictures. The Unit charges just a nominal fee to cover the printing costs.



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<p><b>Rhine River Cruise June 17 - 27, 2020</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•4 Seasons Tour Director Glen Parsons</li> <li>•Roundtrip Delta flights</li> <li>•2 nights accommodations at Superior hotels</li> <li>•7 night southbound cruise on the Vista</li> <li>•All meals and entertainment onboard the Vista</li> <li>•All transfers to and from the airport, hotel and ship</li> <li>•All entrance fees outlined in the itinerary</li> <li>•Luggage handling on the ship</li> <li>•<b>\$6,899.00 per person double occupancy</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>Ark Encounter &amp; Creation Museum June 14-19, 2020</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•4 Seasons Tour Director Cindy Peterson</li> <li>•Deluxe motorcoach transportation</li> <li>•5 nights accommodations</li> <li>•9* Meals: 5 breakfasts, 2 dinners,*2 hot snack</li> <li>•Judge Davis Mansion</li> <li>•Creation Museum</li> <li>•Ark Encounter</li> <li>•Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption</li> <li>•Dinner Cruise</li> <li>•Lincoln Boyhood Home, Museum and Tomb</li> <li>•Dana Thomas Home and Illinois Old state Capital</li> <li>•<b>\$999.00 per person double occupancy</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>Summer on the Mississippi July 15-18, 2020</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•4 Seasons Tour Director Brenda Malepsy</li> <li>•Deluxe motorcoach transportation</li> <li>•3 nights accommodations</li> <li>•7 Meals: 3 breakfasts, 1 lunch, 3 dinners</li> <li>•Day long cruise on the Celebration Belle</li> <li>•Tours of the John Deere Pavilion and Isabel Bloom Studio</li> <li>•History's Channel's American Pickers' Antique Archeology</li> <li>•Beauty and the Beast at Circa "21 Dinner Theater</li> <li>•<b>\$689.00 per person double occupancy</b></li> </ul>
<p><b>Heart of Alaska July 15-22, 2020</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•4 seasons Tour Director Tammi Haney</li> <li>•Nonstop Delta flights</li> <li>•7 nights superior accommodations</li> <li>•14 Meals; 7 breakfasts,5 lunches, 2 dinners</li> <li>•Iditarod Trail Headquarters with Sled Dog Demo</li> <li>•Denali the Alaska Railroad in a Express Dome Car</li> <li>•Denali National Park Natural History Tour</li> <li>•Riverboat Discovery Cruise</li> <li>•Meares Glacier · Chena Indian Village</li> <li>•Prince William Sound · Pan for Gold at Dredge #8</li> <li>•<b>\$3,799.00 per person double occupancy</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>Alaska Tour &amp; Cruise August 15-29, 2020</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•4 Seasons Tour Director Tammi Haney</li> <li>•Roundtrip Delta flights</li> <li>•7 nights accommodations</li> <li>•7 night Southbound Cruise on the Grand Princess®</li> <li>•All meals and entertainment onboard the ship</li> <li>•Onboard gratuities and transfers to/from pier</li> <li>•All sightseeing/entrances fees as stated in itinerary</li> <li>•<b>\$5,099.00 per person double occupancy</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>Irish Gold Sept. 26-Oct 5, 2020</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•4 Seasons Tour Director Tammi Haney</li> <li>•Roundtrip flights</li> <li>•8 nights accommodations with luggage handling</li> <li>•14 Meals</li> <li>•Blarney Castle</li> <li>•Trinity College &amp; The Book of Kells</li> <li>•Cliffs of Moher · House of Waterford Crystal</li> <li>•Ring of Kerry · Kylemore Abbey &amp; Gardens</li> <li>•<b>\$4,799.00 per person double occupancy</b></li> </ul>



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