

The Minnesota American Legion and Auxiliary

Legionnaire



Volume 98, Number 11

For God and Country

November 2016

Leading Candidate Rohan tells conference: 'We are family'

MARSHALL — Destined to be the first woman commander of The American Legion, Leading Candidate Denise Rohan of Wisconsin had one word for Minnesotans at the Fall Conference: Family.

Rohan is due to be elected national commander at the Reno Convention this coming year, and the convention she presides over will be the Minneapolis Convention in 2018.

"We are an American Legion Family, and we are doing our best to keep this country great," Rohan told a joint meeting of Auxiliary and Legion at the Red Baron Arena in Marshall. "We always should be one happy family united for a common cause."

She spoke of how hard the deployments of service people over the past 15

years have been on the families, and she spoke in particular of one eight-year-old boy who said in a counseling session that he didn't know his own father.

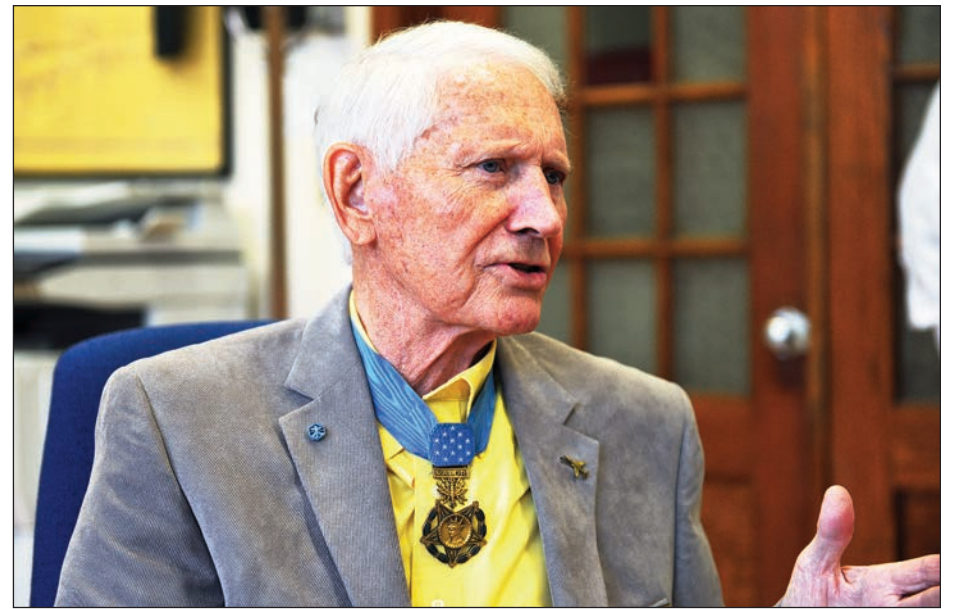
"The counselor said it was okay, but I don't think it's okay. It's not okay."

She said the Legion Family must look after the families of those deployed. "The Legion has to take care of the families. When soldiers are overseas, they're not concerned about the battles they're facing there, they're concerned about the battles their families are facing at home."

Rowan outlined other ways the Legion can help service people including job fairs for when they get home, and "setting a patriotic example for the nation's children."

Rohan, who is from Verona,

Continued on Page 2



Medal of Honor recipient Leo Thorsness came home to Walnut Grove. He was in Minnesota as part of the MOH national convention held in the Twin Cities.

Hometown hero comes home

Leo Thorsness, Minnesota's only living Medal of Honor recipient, came home to a rousing reception with friends, family and school children in little Walnut Grove

By Al Zdon

Whoever said you can never go home again wasn't in Walnut Grove in early October.

Medal of Honor recipient Leo Thorsness made a triumphal return to his hometown, greeting school children, old friends and community members with equal parts of enthusiasm and love.

Thorsness, a Vietnam War Air Force pilot who earned his Medal of Honor in 1967 just 11 days before he was shot down and captured, spent a hectic two-plus hours in what was the Walnut Grove High School and is now a regional elementary and middle school.

He arrived promptly at 9 a.m. in a convoy of official vehicles and flashing lights.

He and his wife of 63 years, Gaylee,

walked hand in hand up the sidewalk into the school, with Leo stopping frequently to greet people, shake hands, laugh and trade some old memories.

One old classmate hugged the war hero and laughed, "The other girls and I used to put gum in your hair." Thorsness agreed, "They were just terrible to me."

He was asked if he wanted a golf cart ride up to the school, but he declined, saying, "I think I can make it that far." Thorsness, 84, is fighting cancer, and it is difficult for him to stand even for short periods.

Inside the school, he was ushered into a large room that had been converted into a museum for Walnut Grove schools, with letter jackets and cheer-

Continued on Page 8



MAIN STREET MARSHALL -- Department Commander Denise Milton waved to a passerby in downtown Marshall during an awareness walk held at the Fall Conference. Leading National Commander Candidate Denise Rohan of Wisconsin helped lead the walk aimed at promoting the Legion and veterans causes.

Activities planned for 75th Pearl Harbor anniversary

A series of events have been planned to help Minnesotans mark the 75th anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor.

On December 7 at the Minnesota Historical Society, there will be a program in the morning in the 3M Auditorium. The program, co-sponsored by the Pearl Harbor Survivors Association, the Fort Snelling Memorial Rifle Guard, the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs and others, will feature music, a video tribute and remarks by retired Brig. Gen. Joseph Kelly.

At 1 p.m., also at 3M Auditorium, there will be presentations of events regarding Pearl Harbor. At 3:30 p.m. Mark Wortman, author of *1941* will discuss events leading up to the Japanese attack.

And at 7 p.m., Dave Kenny, author of *Minnesota Goes to War*, will talk about the home front.

Admission to the Minnesota Historical Society is free for active duty military and veterans.

On December 8, the World War II History Round Table at the Fort Snelling History Center will hear a talk from Col. John A. Adams, author of *The Fighting Defenders of Bataan and Corregidor*. Veterans of the Philippines will discuss the attack of the Japanese at Bataan.

Admission is \$5.

The one-hour ceremony, from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. at the History Center on Dec. 7 will be live streamed on the MNHS website: mnhs.org/pearl-harbor event.



Thorsness greeted a line of local Legionnaires outside the former Walnut Grove high school where he graduated in 1950.

Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

By
Ron Quade



Cutting Edge Advocacy

Your American Legion Claims Divisions are at the cutting edge of advocacy at a local, State, Federal and National level. In previous segments you learned about MDVA and American Legion Claims Division. This month you will learn about a new and exciting Board of Veteran Appeals (BVA) project the Claims Division helped create and execute beginning in 2015 and through 2016.

In October 2015 MDVA Claims Director (Quade) was contacted by American Legion National Claims Director (Hearn) with an opportunity to discuss participation in a potential pilot project in where local Regional Office Power of Attorney (POA) Offices would cooperate with BVA Judges to determine cases most easily granted or remanded. This process, the first of its kind, would allow the Claims Division Staff, who are most familiar with the claims, to communicate to a BVA Judge directly. Cases in VA Veteran Benefits Management System (VBMS) could be considered for resolution without year's long wait for a formal hearing.

MDVA and American Legion Claims Division was contacted by BVA Judge John Crowley as the test pilot POA. MDVA / AL was selected based on our reputation for education, quality argument and development of VA-46 addendum or legal brief attached to the claims file upon certification to the BVA. An initial discussion resulted in a decision Judge Crowley would work to establish a pilot at a National Level and the Judge would leave local program parameters up to MDVA. MDVA developed a local program and the judge has been successful nationally.

The program known as Pre-Hearing Conference Pilot program has been hugely successful. To date The American Legion Claims Division held four hearings, settled almost 17% of our current issues on behalf of our claimants and we have a 100% success rate in grants or remands of claims. Some claims even paying out decades of retroactive payments to claimants. All of these actions would have taken years before they would have been decided under the normal BVA process. We are proud to announce this program has gained attention and support of U.S. Congress and the VA leadership. The Program will soon start its initial year at eleven Regional Offices including St. Paul with all indication it will become a permanent VA program nationally. Your American Legion Claims Division is working hard for you on the cutting edge of advocacy.

Please contact your local County Veteran Service Office or contact the AL Claims Division directly at 612 970 5662.

Quade is the director of The American Legion claims division at the MDVA.

Thank you

Thank you to everyone for all of your kind words, thoughts, prayers and cards that you expressed to me after the recent death of Dick Amundson. He was a very special person to me and we enjoyed 32 years of happiness together. Thank you so much to all of you for attending his "Celebration of Life." Dick will be missed by all. He would have been happy to see how many people were there to honor him as this was what he wanted.

Pam Hoshal

Thank you American Legion Sixth District and Department of Minnesota for all the prayers and thoughts and deeds expressed to our family throughout the three years of John's illness. He never expressed a word of pain, ever. Bless each and everyone of you. If you're ever in Fargo, stop at Riverview Place, 104B, which is my location. The kids are still in Baudette with their families. Take care of one another always.

Jean Bey

Rohan, Nelson speak at Fall Conference

Continued from Page 1

Wisconsin, said it was imperative that we keep The American Legion strong. "We all made sacrifices in the military, and we have to make sure those sacrifices were not in vain."

The Legion Family, she said, "must continue to serve veterans, their families and our communities. Thank you for always putting family first."

Rohan was followed by the other featured speaker on Saturday morning of the Fall Conference, Auxiliary Northwestern Division Vice President Virginia Nelson

of Nebraska.

Nelson said her theme for the year was "God and Country," and her talk was on how historically our great leaders were imbued with a deep faith.

"General George Washington prayed twice a day, and prayer was part of his battle plan as he led his men," Nelson said.

When Washington led the Americans in the crossing of the Delaware River to the Battle of Trenton on the day after Christmas, 1776, it was a daring raid. "We didn't have the right clothes, the right boats, the

right equipment. "But God was looking after these patriots. That's the miracle."

She talked about how group prayers were said each day when the Constitution was being framed, and how in 1789 Washington declared a

national day of thanksgiving, a holiday we still celebrate.

Nelson said religious faith has been a constant part of the American Heritage. "Our leaders worked within their faith. They made America great, through the grace of God."

American Legion Riders

By Chuck Stone and Dennis Lewison



Greetings American Legion Family, Fall is in the air, leaves have changed their color and are falling all around us. The Riders will soon be putting their motorcycles away for the winter but that doesn't mean we aren't still out there doing all the great things to support Veterans and their families. Hope to see as many Riders as possible at Fall Conference in Marshall. Wishing all safe travels and a Happy Thanksgiving.

Chuck Stone, Director MNALR

First District Report

First of all, I would like to congratulate Chuck Stone, a member of the First District ALR and his officers on their election to the MN ALR. I would like to thank Chuck for giving me the honor of installing him as the new MN ALR Director at the ROMP held at Legionville.

Talking about the ROMP, the First District had another good turn out this year. A special thanks to Dave Vulcan and his crew for the great meals. Thank you 6th District Director, Paul for setting up the weekend activities.

The First District Legacy Scholarship ride was a big success this year. We had 62 registered participants. We started with a kick off gathering at the Kasson Post #333. Leaving from there on Saturday. The overnight stay was hosted by the LaCrescent Post #595 legion family. A meal was provided and an auction to raise money for the fund. The ride continued on Sunday with our ending stop at the Eyota American Legion Post #551 for lunch, refreshments and more fund raising events. At the end of the ride we had raised over \$16,000. A big thank you goes out to all of the Posts, Auxiliary Units, SAL Squadron who donated. Thank you to the ride committee for all of the time and hard work to set the wheels in motion.

Chapters in the First District have been busy with their own activities which include bike shows, flag lines, fund raising events for other organizations and the dedication of a new Veteran's memorial. The First District had the honor of escorting the "Quilts of Valor" bus into Albert Lea Post

56 where the quilters presented around 40 quilts to local veterans.

We meet as a district on a quarterly basis. We try to attend events of the chapters in our district. We have a "Rider of the Year" award and we are always looking for ways to raise funds for the American Legion Legacy Scholarship Funds.

Dennis Lewison, First District ALR Director

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Membership Chart

As of October 19, 2016

District	2017 Goal	Total 2016	Total 2017	Percent of Goal	Same Date '15
1	9,380	9,322	6,425	68.50	6,684
2	7,572	7,488	5,433	71.75	5,434
3	11,977	11,912	8,519	71.13	8,698
4	2,592	2,572	1,756	67.75	1,798
5	2,679	2,657	1,794	66.97	1,932
6	12,109	12,038	8,547	70.58	8,712
7	6,695	6,619	4,631	69.17	4,791
8	4,417	4,377	2,974	67.33	2,990
9	7,015	6,950	4,673	66.61	4,826
10	10,611	10,557	7,126	67.51	7,353
At-large	1,953	2,710	1,501	78.19	1,758
Totals	77,000	77,202	53,405	69.36	54,976

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Endorsements

Stump endorsed for Vice Cdr.

Champlin Post 600 has endorsed William V. Stump Jr. for 8th and 10th District Vice Commander for the coming year.

Stump is a past 10th

District Commander, past commander of St. Louis Park Post 282, and past commander of Hopkins Post 320.

At the Department level

he was the chairman of the Community Services Committee.

He is the judge advocate for the 10th District at this time.



BILL STUMP JR.

Hill endorsed for Sgt.-at-Arms

Brewster Post 464 and the Nobles County Council have endorsed Ryan Hill for Department Sgt.-at-Arms for the 2017-2018 year.

Hill enlisted in the US Navy in February, 1968, and served 4 years on active duty and 2 years in the Reserves. He served on the USS Oriskany, CVA-34, for 4 tours to Vietnam and was discharged on 13 February, 1974.

Hill is a 39 year member

of Brewster American Legion Post 464. He helped start the Brewster Sons of the American Legion Squadron and is a 5 year SAL member there.

He served as 2nd District Commander in 2015-2016, 2nd District 1st Vice Commander in 2014-2015, 2nd District Vice Commander from 2012-2014 and is currently 2nd District Legislation Chairman.

Hill served on the SDSP soybean crush plant at Volga South Dakota for 14 years, 9 of those years as Public Relations Chairman. He then served as an advisor to the MnSP start-up at Brewster Minnesota.

Hill and his wife Naomi have two children and two grandchildren. He has farmed in the Brewster area all his adult life.



RYAN HILL

Minnesota Boys Stater is Samsung winner



JAMES LIBBEY

James Libbey of St. Michael has been named one of Samsung's American Legion Scholars for this year and will be the recipient of a \$20,000 Samsung scholarship.

Libbey attended Minnesota Boys State this past spring. He was sponsored by St. Louis Park Post 282.

At Boys State, he won the Samsung Scholarship contest and automatically qualified for the national scholarship.

He will be able to use the money for school expenses for six years from the time

he graduates from high school, excluding time in the service or church missions.

The money can be used for tuition, room and board, books and supplies, fees and equipment.

All Samsung winners will be honored during a recognition event in Washington D.C. scheduled for June 5-7 this coming year.

Only a handful of Department scholarship winners earn the \$20,000 scholarship at the national level.

Libbey is a senior at

Benilde St. Margaret.

A Girls State delegate was also a finalist for the top award and earned a \$750 scholarship. Sophia Peterson of Orono attended the 2016 Girls State program and won the Minnesota Samsung competition.



MILTON AT THE MIKE -- Commander Denise Milton recorded the Minnesota American Legion's message on Minnesota Military Radio recently. The ad will run this month. The program is on dozens of radio stations throughout the state.



WOMEN POWER -- National Commander Charles Schmidt posed with women department adjutants and department commanders at the Fall Meetings in Indianapolis. Department Commander Denise Milton is second from right.



DEER HUNT -- The annual deer hunt for disabled vets was held at Camp Ripley near Little Falls. Commander Denise Milton, Department Service Officer Jeremy Wolfsteller and Assistant DSO Heather Larson gather around a veteran who got his deer.

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**COMMANDER'S
COLUMN****By Denise Milton**

Greetings.

We have just returned home from our American Legion Family Fall Conference. Thanks to all of you who attended. I hope that you had an opportunity to come away with something new and able to use at your home posts.

Thank you to the Marshall Legion family for making our conference run seamlessly from the easy registration check-in, efficient shuttles and the new Red Baron Arena - what a wonderful facility. We had plenty of room and the audio-video equipment was state of the art. Conference Chairman Jeffery Gay was always available if I had any questions. Thank you.

We couldn't have had better weather for the Veterans Awareness Walk on Friday afternoon. We walked from the post to the community's 911 Memorial. What an awesome memorial, they have included a steel beam that had been salvaged from the Twin Towers of New York City. We took time to reflect and remember what happened that day and honor those that lost their lives. Our special guest, the leading candidate for National Commander Denise Rohan gave a stirring message about courage, sacrifice and patriotism. We must never forget or allow others to forget. I want to extend a big thank you for all those that walked with us. The proceeds from the sale of the T-shirts will be sent to National Commander Schmidt's project: Temporary

Mail Call

Great Organization

To the Editor:

Just got through reading my August 2016 issue of the Minnesota Legionnaire newspaper. Was sad to learn of the still steadily declining membership and subsequent annual dues increase. The cost of printing the magazine and newspaper are not going down so the increase is justified.

This of course would not be happening if the veterans who came home from the military service in the past twenty years would join an organization as great as The American Legion. I hope they remember this when the politicians start taking away their benefits little at a time that I told you so.

Tom Dokulil
Apple Valley

Half-staff Overuse

To the Editor:

I couldn't agree more about the overuse of ordering the flag flown at half-staff.

It cheapens the meaning of the honor when everyone is honored. It is like the participation awards for most youth (and some adult) activities where effort, merit, and outstanding achievement are meaningless.

It is also like the routine use of the standing ovation; every performance is now deemed worthy of what was intended as extraordinary recognition, and those who do not feel it justified are chastised for not joining in. Or grade inflation in school and university.

On the the other hand, now that it has been established by usage, any president or governor who doesn't order it will be criticized by partisans for the deceased.

J.G.G. Kahn Sr.
Eyota

Uncommon Valor

To the Editor:

After the last shot were fired on Iwo Jima, and before leaving battalion headquarters, we went over to where the Graves Division had erected white crosses marking the location of those killed. Those who paid the final price were sealed in body bags in a wooden coffin, where, lying in wait for a time after the war when they would all be brought home to their families and loved ones.

In the meantime, from high on top of Mt. Suribachi, our nation's flag of 48 stars, that silent sentinel of freedom, the soul of our nation, continued to wave from the mountain top. For many who had cheered and waved at it, they would never see another flag.

They came from all corners of America, Hispanic, Jewish and Italian, black and white, rich and poor. Together as one unit, they fought to make a difference.

The U.S. military recruits members for one purpose, to fight our country's battles anywhere in the world. When one

Financial Assistance and continued training of our Veteran Service Officers.

Saturday was spent together as a Legion Family learning about our programs and giving special recognition to those that have made a difference in our lives. Leading National Commander Candidate Denise Rohan of Wisconsin gave a moving and inspirational speech. We will be starting the second 100 years of The American Legion with great leadership with an emphasis on "Family First."

Election Day will soon be upon us and we will be electing new leaders. Review and understand their platforms and how it affects the lives of our veterans, our families and our communities. We can make a difference. Encourage your neighbors and friends to get out and vote. Thanks in advance to all of you who assist at the polls, registering voters, offering rides to those who need them.

Veterans Day has always been an important day in The American Legion. It is a time we remember and honor all our veterans that have served and protected our country and way of life. It is quite busy with all the meal preparations, parades and speeches that it is easy to forget those that are less visible. Once a veteran, always a veteran. Remember to thank them.

We have had several revitalizations already this year and many more are scheduled for the upcoming months. I know that the 5th District is planning a revitalization from 17-19 of November at the Richfield Post. Do not hesitate to call Mark Dvorak, our membership director or myself if you wish to conduct one in your post, county or district.

The month of October was filled with many membership dinners, committee meetings, deer hunting at Camp Ripley and Legionville, Fall meetings at National Headquarters. I never tire of visiting all the war memorials in Indianapolis. I learn something new about all of our wonderful programs and can't wait to share with others. It takes many hours of volunteering and dedication to be successful.

I would like to take this time to extend to you all a very happy Thanksgiving. My favorite season is the fall. The colors and clear, fresh air are wonderful. It is a time to count our blessings, be thankful for all that we have: family, friends and to live in a country that I still believe in and love.

joins the military, he or she metaphorically writes a check payable to the United States of America and signs it for any amount up to and including his or her own life. That is dedication, commitment and patriotism.

I believe that God gave America the greatest gift He could bestow to man while he lives on earth -- freedom. He also gave us another gift, our soldiers, sailors, Marines, customs and border patrol, Coast Guard, National Guard, and law enforcement to safeguard that gift and to guarantee that no force on earth, internal or external, can ever steal it away.

An unbreakable bond has been forged between those who fought, side by side, in combat action. You either die in a red flash on the battlefield or survive to the cold of a nursing home. The memory of long past battles is forever indelibly embedded in our minds, and we'll take that memory to our graves.

Whether one lives to the age of 19, or the ripe old age of 90 plus, in every human heart lies the pure joy and wonderment of playing the game of life.

Whether in the vigor of youth, or the declining years of peace and tranquility, we will all die. But the U.S. military lives on.

Everyone who served is living still in those who claim the title of soldier, sailor, airman, Marine, or Guardsman. This is especially true of our law enforcement officers who keep a sense of order. It is a sense of belonging that will outlive our own mortality which gives people a light to live by and a flame to mark their passing.

Veterans of the Iwo Jima battle have gathered for reunions, but the number is dwindling. We may have seen the last reunion.

The United States Marine Corps has deemed the Battle for Iwo Jima the worst armed conflict in its 240-year history. That flag on top of Mt. Suribachi, put up by a gutsy bunch of Marines, will remain in memory of all who served.

Marshall Harris
Carrollton, Texas

(Marshall Harris is a native Minnesotan who served at Iwo Jima.)

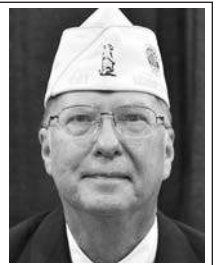
Corrections

A story in the October issue incorrectly listed the title for Eric Grumdahl at the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs. He is Special Advisor on Ending Veterans Homelessness.

A photo in a prior issue of the Legionnaire incorrectly listed the name of a member receiving a 60-year certificate at Oklee Post 159. His name is Elmer Hanson.

Chaplain's Corner

By
Bill Brockberg



We give and we give thanks

As we enter this month of November or depending on your branch of the service, as we march, ride, crawl, sail, fly or coast into November, we will continue to give of ourselves and our time and we will also give thanks for many blessings come Thanksgiving Day.

The first Thanksgiving actually occurred in October of 1621, when a small band of pilgrims joined together with some local Indians to give thanks for the bountiful harvest of crops—crops that produced more than enough corn to see them through their second winter.

Things were not always so joyous for these Pilgrims, they had suffered much pain and loss of life that first year and winter, but they suffered their way through to thanksgiving. Even though they had endured great hardship, they maintained steadfast in their faith to God and through the Almighty's guidance and grace, they more than just survived—they flourished. They could not help, but to give thanks.

More than 200 years later, in 1864, Abraham Lincoln declared a national day of thanksgiving. The proclamation called the nation to set aside the last Thursday in the month of November as a time of thanksgiving to Almighty God for his blessings. Ever since, our Country has observed this occasion.

I remember my first thanksgiving in the Army. I was stationed in Germany in the Field Artillery and my first major training exercise that November of 1982 was to Grafenwoher, Germany and its large live-fire training base. It was sometimes cold, most of the time rainy and all of the time muddy and miserable. Through it all on Thanksgiving Day, the unit, indeed the whole Battalion was brought in to garrison for a hot, thanksgiving dinner. The celebration gave us all something to be thankful for. Stories abound of fond memories when service members were pulled out of the field, or taken off of their current duty, to enjoy a special, often solemn moment of thanks for getting through the day, not having to eat C-rations or nowadays, M-R-E's. And in these circumstances, as well as present day and pleasant circumstances, we give thanks.

In the Bible, the apostle Paul begins nine of his thirteen epistles recorded in the New Testament with phrases like this one; "First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you" (Romans 1:8). At the church in Rome he was thankful for their increase in faith; in Corinth, it was for the grace given to them; at Ephesus, it was for their love and attention they gave to other believers; at Philippi, it was their partnership in the gospel they had with Paul; and at Thessalonica, it was for their work and labor for Christ. Paul was thankful through God for people, and all the wonderful things God was doing in and through their lives.

As we Legionnaires pilgrimage in this life we are compelled to continually grow and serve with our giving of our possessions and ourselves. We do this for all our service members serving today and for those who served before them. We do this in response to all that God has done for us. Like the Apostle Paul, we can be thankful for the many reasons Paul gave thanks for the people in his life. We give of our time and money to the Legion and other charities. And for all the wonderful things God does in our lives, we give thanks.

The Minnesota Legionnaire

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Al Zdon, Editor

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What's Happening

WWII GI Bill vets

A Harvard researcher is doing a study on veterans who used the GI Bill following World War II. He is seeking veterans who used the bill, particularly in the 1946-48 time period. If you would like to contribute, contact Tarpley Hitt at ahitt@college.harvard.edu.

Yarn sought

A volunteer who knits for Treats for Troops is seeking yarn to continue his efforts. If you would like to contribute, contact Mona Longtin at rlongtin@fronteimet.net.

Shop, Ship and Share

The Fourth District will again sponsor Shop, Ship and Share this year. It will be held at the Maplewood Mall on Friday, Dec. 2, and Saturday, Dec. 3, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. with a program on Saturday at 2. There will be postal services available to ship packages, purchase stamps and other postal supplies. Items can be donated or money can be donated. Donations can be sent to Fourth District, Packages for the Military, Box 17035, St. Paul, MN 55117-0035.

Fargo VA documentary

The Fargo VA will present "Citizen Soldier" on Nov. 10 at 3:30 p.m. in the Third Floor Auditorium. It will be followed by a moderated panel discussion.

The film includes footage of real battles fought by an Oklahoma Guard Unit deployed to Afghanistan in 2011. A member of the unit will be on hand.

The event is free, but registration is preferred: 701-239-3700, extension 94311.

Linden Grove Apartments

The Linden Grove Apartments in St. Cloud are now open for occupancy. The community has a priority for vet-

erans who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. The apartments are affordable and permanent. For information, contact Sand Property Management, 320-258-3400.

Holiday Party

The Gen. John Vessey Chapter of the Association of the United States Army will be having its annual wounded warrior holiday party at the Polytrauma Unit at the Minneapolis VA Medical Center. It is for wounded veterans and their families.

Each hero receives a gift bag worth \$400. Donations are accepted. Contact Cintia Rivas, AUSA, 3459 Washington Drive, Suite 208, Eagan, MN 55122.

100 Memorials

Cities that have World War I memorials can apply for a grant of up to \$2,000 in the 100 Cities/ 100 Memorials project sponsored by the WWI Centennial Commission, the Pritzker Military Museum and Library, and The American Legion.

Grants can be used to restore the memorials to their original quality. For more information, go to the project's website: ww1cc.org/100memorials.

Wolfsteller on TV

KARE-11 in the Twin Cities will be doing a news feature on service members who were discharged with a less than honorable discharge that could have been related to PTSD or TBI. The American Legion has been in the forefront of helping veterans get an upgrade in their discharge if warranted.

Part of the news show will be an interview with Department Service Officer Jeremy Wolfsteller. The program will air on Veterans Day.

November Round Tables

The World War II History Round Table will feature the 75th Anniversary of the Battle of Bataan and Corregidor on December 8, at 7 p.m. The program will feature John Adams the author of a book on the battles. There will also be veterans of the conflict. Admission is \$5.

The St. Croix Valley Civil War Roundtable will feature "Sherman's March through the Carolinas." The event is a dinner program at the Lowell Inn in Stillwater. It will be held Monday, Nov. 28.

For more information, contact Steve Anderson at 715-386-1268.

Legal Clinic

A free drop-in legal clinic will be held Tuesday, Nov. 15, at the Minneapolis VA Medical Center in the Flag Atrium Balcony Room. It will be held from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. There is free parking also.

The clinics offer veterans advice on housing, employment, benefits, expungement, wills, debt collection, family law including child support. Attorneys and staff from the Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans will be on hand.

Caregiver Celebration

The St. Cloud VA Medical Center will host a "celebration of caregivers" education and resource fair in the Auditorium, Building 8, at the medical center on Nov. 18 from 9:30 a.m. until 2 p.m.

There will be various workshops throughout the day including PTSD and families, memory loss activities, dementia, traumatic brain injury, strength-based language, resource fair and suicide prevention.

For information, contact 320-252-1670, extension 7283.

Taps

Karnas, George James, 86, veteran of the Korean War, died Oct. 19, 2016. He was very active in American Legion Baseball as a coach and district director and served as the state director for many years. He was a past commander of Richfield Post 435.

Ellison, John, 87, Navy veteran of the Korean War, died Oct. 12, 2016. He was a member of Thief River Falls Post 117.

Bisher, Robert A., 70, Navy veteran of the Vietnam War, died Sept. 12, 2016. He also served in and retired from the Army. He was a "hard hat" diver in the Navy and received a special commendation for clearing the Suez Canal. He was a member of Rice Post 473.

Stangl, Herman F., 84, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Oct. 7, 2016. He was a past commander of Pierz Post 341.

Kummet, Brian Michael, 30, Air Force veteran of the Iraq War, died Sept. 23, 2016. He was an aircraft maintenance specialist. He was a past commander of Pierz Post 341.

Baldwin, Roger Allen, 89, Navy veteran of World War II, died Oct. 3, 2016. He was a past commander of Big Lake Post 147.

Wolter, Clift C., 88, Minnesota National Guard veteran of the Korean War, died Oct. 1, 2016. He was in the 135th Tank Company in Redwood Falls, serving in Korea. He was a member of Franklin Post 308.

Gillen, Jeanne Marie (Goar), 92, Navy veteran of World War II, died Sept. 28, 2016. She was a PBX operator in San Pedro, Calif. She was a member of Faribault Post 43.

Baarson, Olgar "Oggie", 96, Army veteran of World War II, died Oct. 9, 2016. He served as a military policeman. He was a member of Trimont Post 373.

Schmoltdt, Howard R., 86, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Oct. 10, 2016. He was member of Trimont Post 373.

Amiot, Clarence, 88, Air Force veteran of World War II, died Oct. 1, 2016. He was a flight surgeon and medical assistant in Guam. He was a member of Thief River Falls Post 117.

Loeffler, Elgin, 94, Army veteran of World War II, died Oct. 1, 2016. His tank was hit during the Battle of the Bulge in 1944 and he was captured. A German doctor removed shrapnel and an eye. He was a member of Thief River Falls Post 117.

Peters, William Bernard, 83, Navy veteran of the Korean War, died Sept. 24, 2016. He was a member of Rush City Post 93.

Buss, Birchard, 98, Navy veteran of World War II, died Oct. 16, 2016. He was a radio operator. He was a member of Claremont Post 422.

Holmgren, Donald R., 91, Army veteran of the Korean

War, died Sept. 25, 2016. He was a member of Willmar Post 167.

Krueger, Donald P., 87, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Oct. 14, 2016. He was a member of East Grand Forks Post 157.

Karthus, John, 85, Air Force veteran of the Korean War, died Oct. 10, 2016. He was a radio operator in the Aleutian Islands. He was a member of Austin Post 91.

Postera, Norman, 90, Army veteran of World War II, died Sept. 29, 2016. He was an infantryman serving in Europe. He was a member of Marshall Post 113.

Harriman, James J., 79, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Sept. 21, 2016. He was a member of Waconia Post 150.

Stroud, Kenneth, 78, Coast Guard veteran of the Vietnam War, died Oct. 6, 2016. He was a member of Cloquet Post 262.

Renstrom, William, 86, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Sept. 29, 2016. He served in the 2nd Armored Division. He was a member of Mora Post 201.

Gall, Norbert Jr., 89, Army veteran of World War II, died Sept. 26, 2016. He was a member of Mora Post 201.

Dorman, Junior A., 83, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Sept. 17, 2016. He was a member of Albert Lea Post 56.

Nelson, Richard D., 81, National Guard veteran of the Vietnam War, died Sept. 21, 2016. He was a member of Albert Lea Post 56.

Jacobs, George M., 87, Navy veteran of the Korean War, died Oct. 1, 2016. He was a member of Albert Lea Post 56.

Mulholland, Cecil B., 79, Army veteran of the Vietnam War, died Sept. 19, 2016. He was a member of Albert Lea Post 56.

Netjes, Henry, 92, Army veteran of World War II, died Sept. 14, 2016. He was stationed in the Philippines and Hawaii with the 4025th Signal Services Group as a sergeant. He was a member of Edgerton Post 42.

Emery, Wilbur George, 98, Army veteran of World War II, died Oct. 5, 2016. He was a member of Red Wing Post 54.

Samec, Frank R., 86, Air Force veteran of the Korean War, died Oct. 3, 2016. He was a member of Chisholm Post 247.

Schmakel, Larry S., 67, Army veteran of the Vietnam War, died Oct. 5, 2016. He was a member of Waconia Post 150.

Allerman, John C., 74, Army veteran of the Vietnam War, died Oct. 2, 2016. He was a member of Little Falls Post 46.

Gallaher, Richard Glen, 85, Navy veteran of the Korean War, died Oct. 26, 2016. He was a torpedoman first

class. He was a member of Austin Post 91.

Stoll, Emil, 88, Navy veteran of World War II, died Sept. 13, 2016. He was a member of Fairfax Post 205.

Ress, William George, 86, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Sept. 28, 2016. He was a member of Keewatin Post 452.

Klankowski, DuWayne, 86, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Sept. 17, 2016. He was a member of Caledonia Post 191.

Colsch, Ronnie "Punk", 68, Army veteran of the Vietnam War, died Sept. 22, 2016. He was a member of Caledonia Post 191.

Froderman, Eldred, 92, Army veteran of World War II, died Sept. 19, 2016. He was a member of Round Lake Post 461.

Geertsema, Douglas R., 78, Army veteran of the Vietnam War, died Sept. 25, 2016. He was a member of Round Lake Post 461.

Prescher, Roland John, 93, Army Air Corps veteran of World War II, died Oct. 14, 2016. He was a waist gunner on a B-24 flying out of Italy. He was shot down over Yugoslavia and saved by the partisans. He was a member of Blue Earth Post 89.

Swanberg, Glen, 74, Army veteran of the Vietnam War, died Oct. 20, 2016. He was a member of East Grand Forks Post 157.

Wehseler, Henry, 95, Navy veteran of World War II, died Oct. 17, 2016. He served in the Pacific.

Tomala, Zeno H., 80, Navy veteran of the Korean War, died Oct. 16, 2016. He served on the USS Vega. He was a member of Harris Post 139.

Gabrielson, Arnold, 89, Navy veteran of World War II, died Oct. 13, 2016. He was a past commander of Austin Post 91. He was volunteer driver for veterans going to medical appointments.

Tacheny, Art, 84, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Oct. 10, 2016. He was a member of Rush City Post 93.

Lindstrom, John A., 86, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Sept. 9, 2016. He was a member of Mora Post 201.

Raddatz, Silas Oliver, 94, Navy veteran of World War II, died Oct. 19, 2016. He was a Seabee and served in the Philippines and on Truk Island. He was a past commander of Wood Lake Post 556.

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

Bartly, Irvin Don, 88, Army veteran of World War II, died Oct. 21, 2016. He was a member of Austin Post 91.



“Oh, my gosh, Bill, look!”

A tearful Judy Stein held up a plaque naming her late husband Bill Stein as Legionnaire of the Year toward heaven. It was presented by the Sons of the American Legion. SAL Commander Gene Olsword presented the award which recognized Bill Stein's many years of service to the SAL. He died this year.

Fall Conference in Marshall



Virginia Nelson, National Vice President of the Auxliary, Northwest Division, spoke on Saturday at the Fall Conference. She is from Nebraska.



Vice Commander Harley Wahl led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance to open the conference.



Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs Commissioner Larry Shellito spoke on Friday.



Plaques were awarded to Rep. Bob Dettmer, R-Forest Lake, and Rep. Tim Walz, DFL-Minn., for their work in helping veterans. Neither could attend since they were on the campaign trail. Legislative Chairs Donna Arends and Peggy Moon showed off the plaques.



Denise Rohan of Wisconsin, the leading candidate for National Commander, was the other featured speaker on Saturday morning at the joint session.

Outstanding Guard and Reserve honored



SFC TERRY CLABO
Hutchinson
Army National Guard
A Co., 334 BEB
Nominated by
Hutchinson Post 96



HM1 DANIEL DONDELINGER
Inver Grove Heights
Navy Reserve
Op Support Center
Nominated by
Univ. of MN Post 548



MSGT DEVIN DURYEE
Apple Valley
Air Force Nat'l Guard
133rd Airlift Wing
Nominated by
Wold Chamberlin Post 99



MSGT CLINT HAMANN
Cannon Falls
Air Force Reserve
934th Airlift Wing
Nominated by
Univ. of MN Post 548



National Commander Candidate Denise Rohan and Department Commander Denise Milton pose with the awareness walk banner outside the Marshall Post.



The Second District took first place in membership percentage announced at the conference. From left: Denise Milton, District Membership Director Mike Schaffer, District Commander Mark Coney and Membership Director Mark Dvorak.



Commander Milton had a drawing and presented posts that had registered their histories on the national website with 100-year Centennial patches. From left are Ron Wolford, Anoka Post; Bert Marth, New Ulm Post; Milton; Gene Olsword, New Ulm Post, Larry Pocrnich, Hibbing Post; and Gene Leifeld, Red Wing Post.



A print showing a tractor for handicapped hunters was auctioned off and Garylee Davenport had the top bid of \$250 from the Seventh District and Spicer Post 545. He then donated the print to the Department Headquarters office.



Girls State Senator Hannah Hendrickson of Moorhead told the Fall Conference of her experiences at Girls Nation in Washington D.C.



Chuck Stone, chair of the Pheasant Dinner Fund, presented Department President Carol Kottom a check for \$10,000 for the Auxilairy.



President Kottom and Commander Milton were the final grouping at the Grand March of The American Legion Family.



Department Service Officer Jeremy Wolfsteller gave a talk on veterans whose discharge may have been affected by PTSD.



During Saturday's joint session, SAL Membership Director Cliff Teigland, Department Membership Director Mark Dvorak and Auxiliary Membership Chair Zandra Kessler all gathered at the podium at the Red Baron Arena.

Continued from Page 1

leader outfits hanging from the walls amid hundreds of pictures.

Thorsness looked around, but said he couldn't remember the room. Others seemed to have trouble pinning down its past use also, one saying it was a library, another a study hall and another said it was an English classroom. It may have been all those things at one time or another.

Thorsness graduated from Walnut Grove High School in 1950. He talked about his early years as friends gathered around him in the history room.

Soon, though, he made his way the 100 feet or so across the hall to an even larger room that he did remember well, the gymnasium. The room was filled with perhaps 200 grade school and middle school children and the school band.

The band bravely struck up "The Halls of Montezuma" and finished with "Anchors Aweigh." They may have gotten to the Air Force song, but the program was about to start.

Thorsness settled into a red, padded office chair that the principal assured him was the most comfortable chair in the school. He sat just a few feet from the kids, and began his story.

"I grew up on the farm, but then we moved into town and I had to prove myself all over again. When I lived on the farm, I actually used to ride a horse to school every day.

"I wasn't a great student, but I loved to play sports. I played on every team they had. I really liked sports. Later on, I can't say my time here helped me academically, but it did improve my motor skills.

"And I spent a lot of time out on Plum Creek fishing."

Walnut Grove and Plum Creek were the settings for Laura Ingalls Wilder who wrote the popular "Little House" pioneer books — in particular the book "On the Banks of Plum Creek." It was later a television series.

After high school, Thorsness went on to South Dakota State College at Brookings where he met Gaylee. He later chose the military and became a fighter pilot. "Then Vietnam came along, and that was my war."

He became part of an Air Force group flying out of Thailand that would attack the surface-to-air missile batteries that were becoming lethal to U.S. pilots over North Vietnam. The Air Force unit was called the Wild Weasels.

"In those days, you had to fly 100 missions to go home. I was on my 93rd mission, and I probably shouldn't have flown that day. I got shot down and spent the next six years as a prisoner of war."

Talking to the school children and later in his talks to the press and the community, Thorsness probably didn't say 25 words about an earlier mission where he earned the Medal of Honor. He talked at length, though, about getting shot down and becoming a prisoner of war.

"That day we were flying along at 700 miles an hour and we took a missile right up our tailpipe. I told the other man in the plane to eject and so did I. It was probably the right move because two seconds later the plane exploded."

Thorsness summed up his prisoner experience as being two equal parts, three years of brutality and torture, and three years of boredom.

Much of his early time in prison was spent in solitary confinement in a five-by-six-foot cell.

He said in the latter three years, he got a letter now and then. "Including my tour or flying in Vietnam, I was gone for seven years. All this time, my wife had to be on her own raising our daughter. I didn't see my daughter from the time she was 11 until she was 18. Gaylee did a phenomenal job. For me, raising a teenager was not a bother."

He told the school children, "Life is a battle. Right now I'm fighting cancer."

And he tried to convince them that small towns are great.

"This was such a wholesome place to grow up. The Boy Scouts and Pastor Morgan taught me some values that have served me well through the years."

His mantra, he told the kids, is the four F's: "Friends, Family, Faith and Fun."

The youngsters then had the chance to ask their hometown hero questions. The teachers had worked with the kids, and the questions were read from note cards. Thorsness sometimes had trouble hearing the little voices, but he never gave up until he understood the question.

One question was on how he felt to be released from the Hanoi Hilton.

"I felt mighty good. It was just joy. But as they flew us into an Air Force base in the Philippines, we really weren't sure how we'd be received. We'd been prisoners for a long time, and we weren't supposed to give the enemy anything but name, rank and serial number. But when you're tortured, you tend to say more than that. We didn't know what they thought of us."

When the plane touched down, though, there was a military band. "This was a good sign that we'd be treated well."

Thorsness said he was down to about 110 pounds at one point as a prisoner, and even though the North Vietnamese began feeding them sugar toward the end to fatten them up, he said almost all the prisoners were scrawny.

"When we saw these young Air Force people we just stared at them. We said, 'Boy are you fat.'"

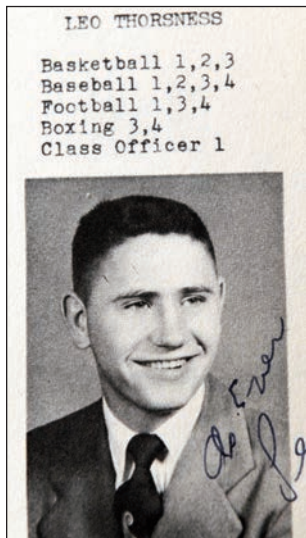
One part of coming home, he said, was the new appreci-

Hometown hero goes home again

Leo Thorsness enjoyed a few hours back in his childhood hometown at Walnut Grove, Minnesota.



Leo Thorsness spoke to the elementary and middle school children in his hometown of Walnut Grove.



At left is Thorsness' picture from his 1950 yearbook at Walnut Grove. At top is a homecoming button from his senior year.



A classmate reminds Thorsness that she and others put gum in his hair at school.

Leo Thorsness has established a business which makes beauty preparations for men. Leo contends that "men can be more beautiful." He is a shining advertisement for his products.

The yearbook in its predictions section didn't quite nail that Thorsness would become a jet fighter pilot.



Walnut Grove city park will be renamed for Thorsness.



Leo and Gaylee met with Thorsness' old friends.

ation for American ideals. "Civilizations come and go. As all of us came home, we came to appreciate the freedom America has. We are a very blessed people. We sometimes take that for granted."

Another question was on why he became a pilot. "That's the best job in the world. Why wouldn't anyone want to be a fighter pilot?"

Going supersonic, screaming over the rice paddies at 20 feet off the deck at 700 miles per hour, trying to avoid a missile. And if it doesn't hit you, that's fun."

How about ejecting from the fighter? "My knees and back were hurt during the ejection. I couldn't walk. I was captured 15 minutes after I hit the ground. They wanted me to walk, but I couldn't. Finally, they put me in a net and carried me off to their village."

Thorsness told of the huge culture shock of going from flying a technologically advanced airplane to lying wounded in a hut in this village. "It was just abject poverty. These people didn't have anything. Some of them were smoking dope. When they took off my flight suit, they were amazed because they had never seen a zipper before."

He said he looked at his partner, Harry Johnson, and wondered about their future. Some pilots were shot within hours of being captured. "Harry said, 'Well, they either will or they won't and there's nothing we can do about it.'"

He talked at length about how long the wait was in the prison camp. He spoke of how discouraged the prisoners were when the bombing stopped in Hanoi, because they felt it was the only leverage the U.S. had in negotiating their release. And he spoke of the joy when the bombing started