

up again two years later.

Another question was on why he did what he did to earn the Medal of Honor. "It was just my job. It's a military tradition that nobody gets left behind. I think any pilot would have done what I did."

One serious young lad asked about the torture. "Oh, you know, the usual," Thorsness said. "Sticks, whips, chains, whatever they had."

The last question was about the best thing in his life. "It's waking up next to my wife Gaylee every morning. It's so peaceful - even if I have been having nightmares all night."



The next section of the morning was a 20-minute session with the press - about half dozen local newspaper people gathered around a table in the history room.

He asked each reporter where they were from. One said he was from Sanborn, and Thorsness' face lit up. "Watermelon Days," he said. "My dad would always take us over there. Those were great days to be a kid."

Thorsness was told by one of the reporters that Walnut Grove now has a very large Hmong population, and that many of the Hmong risked their lives to rescue American pilots during the Vietnam War. Thorsness said he knew that.

He spoke of his days milking cows and then selling the milk on a neighborhood route. "It was so wholesome here. These kids growing up here have got to love what they have. It's not south Chicago. They have all this opportunity. We are so blessed."

What are his favorite memories of growing up in Walnut Grove?

"Hunting and fishing with my friends.

"There was a farmer living south of town who had one old horse who was ready to die. The horse was blind. My father knew this farmer well, and we used to hunt ducks at his pond. One day the farmer asked if he thought that young Leo, me, could come over and shoot the horse and put him out of his misery. My father said that shouldn't be a problem, and he asked me to do it.

"I was with my best friend, Bud Schultz, and we headed over to this farmer's pond with our shotguns to get some ducks. I didn't tell Bud anything about shooting the horse. We didn't get any ducks, and on the way back we went by this horse. I said to Bud, 'I wonder what it would be like to shoot a horse?' He looked at me like I was crazy.

"I took my shotgun off my shoulder and aimed it at the horse and pulled the trigger. It was a big horse and it went down like a ton of bricks. I looked at Bud and said, 'What did we do? Let's get the heck out of here. They're going to arrest us and put us in jail.' We ran all the way back to town.

"I didn't tell Bud the truth for about a week. I just kept saying how 'we' were in trouble. Finally I let him in on it."

A reporter asked if he was an Eagle Scout, and he said he was. "In the prison camp, we figured out that of the 150 of us in that camp, five of us were Eagle Scouts. It's funny how important that was to the people in that camp."

Next up was the meeting with the community and the dedication of the city park with a new name.



There are 77 Medal of Honor recipients alive in the United States, and 34 of them came to the national convention in the Twin Cities. It's probably the most exclusive, elite club in America.

When President Truman awarded Duluth's Mike Colalillo his Medal of Honor in 1945, he looked Colalillo in the eye and said, "I'd rather have one of these than be president."

So how does a person live with that kind of honor, adoration, respect and stardom through the years? Observing the recipients at the opening ceremony at U.S. Bank Stadium, it seemed that some had become a little, how to say it, full of themselves. Others seemed to have adopted kind a patriotic gravitas. Many were friendly and outgoing.

For Leo Thorsness, though, there's only one word to describe his having to wear the crown as a true American hero: Joy.

Wherever he went that morning, that joy and abundance of life just overflowed into the people around him.

And he never seemed more joyful than when he had a chance to talk to his hometown brethren. Again, it was short trip from the history room back to the gymnasium. But now the children were gone, and about 200 neighbors had taken seats on the hardwood floor, which was protected by a gray tarp.

The school band played the National Anthem.

The Walnut Grove American Legion and its Sons of the American Legion detachment had much to do with the planning of the event. Legion member Don Johnson started off the session with a few words and handed off the mike to Mayor Greg Hanson, who was very emotional through his remarks. Thorsness' childhood buddy Sonny Alcorn was next.

"Leo lived in the house just south of the Methodist Church. It was a big place, and that's where all the kids would gather and plan their activities for the night."

The word "activities" drew a laugh from the audience.

"Oh, we didn't do anything illegal or immoral, just the usual kid's stuff."

Alcorn had a special gift for Thorsness. It was a footstool made out of the wood from the original bleachers in the gymnasium from bygone days.

"I'm sure this is where Leo sat while he was on the bench watching the rest of the basketball team play," Alcorn joked.

By this time, Thorsness had to be fairly exhausted by being the center of attention all morning, but when he took the podium, he seemed to catch a second wind.

"First of all I want to talk about the values of a small town. I noticed that during the National Anthem, not one person knelt. Thank you."

It was a reference to some NFL football players who are protesting these days by not honoring the anthem.

Thorsness told the local folks the oft-told story of Mike Christian, the Navy pilot who made a flag at the Hanoi



Thorsness, with Gaylee by his side, was presented the Medal of Honor by President Nixon in 1973.



During his visit to Walnut Grove, it was announced that the city park would be named after Thorsness.



Leo Thorsness talked with people from the community who turned out to meet their favorite son.

prison camp. Somehow a story gets more interesting when it's told by someone who was there.

"Toward the end in Hanoi, we had about 25 or 30 in a room, and one thing we did to pass the time was teach courses to each other. I taught real estate. Both Mike Christian and I took a Spanish course together and we would practice on each other.

"One day Mike found a white rag in the gutter, and he had an idea. We could make a flag. We got the red dye from grinding up some red tiles in the prison. The blue we got from these blue pills they gave us. We never knew what they were for, but we could grind them up and make a blue dye. We made thread from our blankets and needles out of bamboo. After about two weeks we had a flag."

Thorsness said the problem, though, was that every 10

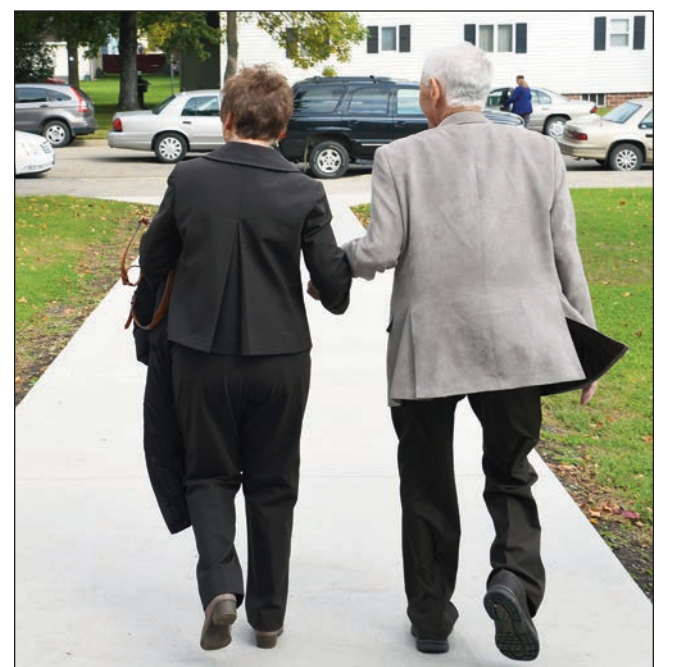
Continued on Page 11



Thorsness was held for six years in prison camps in Hanoi. At one point, he weighed 110 pounds.



Sandy Alcorn, a high school friend, presented Thorsness with a stool made from the original bleachers in the gymnasium. He joked that Thorsness had spent a lot of time on the wood watching others play.



The visit over, Leo and Gaylee walked hand in hand back to the waiting motorcade.

Thorsness earned MOH as Weasel pilot

Leo Thorsness talked to different groups about a variety of different subjects during his hometown visit to Walnut Grove. The one thing he didn't talk about very much was his Medal of Honor and how he earned it.

From his book, *Surviving Hell, A POWs Journey* written in 2008, here's that story:

Major Leo K. Thorsness was stationed at Takhli Air Base in Thailand in 1967. He had been a fighter pilot in the Air Force for many years, racking up over 5,000 hours of flight time. He was 35 years old.

The Vietnam War brought him overseas for combat. At home were his wife, Gaylee, and their daughter, Dawn, then 11 years old.

He was assigned to a group called the Wild Weasels, whose primary mission was to knock out the Soviet-provided surface-to-air missile sites in North Vietnam that were playing havoc with American bombing runs.

The Wild Weasels by that time in the war were using the F-105 Thunderchief, known by the pilots as a "Thud," to find and destroy the SAM sites. The fighter was well armored, very fast and used the latest electronics. It also was not as maneuverable as the smaller Soviet MiGs that it often faced.

The pilot sat in front and the Electronic Warfare Officer, often called a "backseater" was just behind. Capt. Harold Johnson was Thorsness' backseater.

The idea was to aggressively attack an enemy position, and as soon as the SAM site caught the Thunderchief on radar and locked in, the Thud could also electronically "see" the SAM site. The trouble was, both sides could see each other on radar, and the Wild Weasel had the task of destroying the missile site before it could destroy them.

And, quite often, the 105s had to fend off the enemy's MiG jet fighters at the same time.

It was dangerous work, and many Wild Weasel crews were killed or captured.

On April 19, 1967, Thorsness only had a handful of missions left before he and Johnson reached the magic number of 100 and could go home.

Their target that day was the Xuan Mai army barracks and supply depot about 30 miles from Hanoi. Up until that point, the Wild Weasel attacks usually had four planes: one converted 105F, with all the special electronics and special bombs, and three 105Ds, the original fighter version, as wingmen.

But more of the converted 105Fs were coming on line. "Harry and I came up with the idea of having two Weasels in our flight." The two Weasels and two wingmen would then split just before entering the target area, and thus could attack two SAM sites at the same time.

The drawback, of course, was that each Weasel would only have one 105D wingman for protection.

Eighty miles out, the four planes already had picked up two SAM sites and their acquisition radar. More SAM radar quickly came on line. The SAM missiles had a range of 17 miles, while the Weasel missiles had a range of seven miles.

"They got to shoot first, that was their advantage," Thorsness wrote. "Ours was that if they missed us, we had a window of opportunity to kill them."

At 25 miles out, four SAM sites were tracking them. Several anti-aircraft batteries also were locked in. Thorsness waggled his wings, and the other Weasel and its wingman split off to take a northern approach, as had been planned.

Thorsness said, "The high-pitched radio chatter was non-stop" with pilots calling out anti-aircraft bursts, spotter planes calling out MiG attacks, plus Thorsness and Johnson talking to each other.

Suddenly, the northern flight came under MiG attack. The pilot in the Weasel called for "burner," meaning that both 105s should kick in their afterburners and be able to outrace the MiGs. Unfortunately, the wingman's afterburner failed.

The two planes were able to get out of the area, but seconds later Thorsness' wingman radioed, "Kingfish 2 is hit." Thorsness delivered his Shrike missile and bombs on a SAM target and then pulled up. He radioed: "Kingfish 2, head southwest toward the hills, plug in burner, keep transmitting and I'll home in on you."

But the wingman was now seeing more warning lights pop on in his cockpit. As the stricken plane neared the hills, he radioed that the situation was worse.

"Within a few seconds, I heard the sickening sound of the beeper," Thorsness wrote. It indicated that the pilot and his EWO had ejected and were heading for the ground in parachutes.

"I saw them floating down, about two miles ahead of us, their white chutes standing out clearly against the green foothills below. Off to my left... I saw a movement. It was a MiG-17." The MiG's intention was to strafe the two Americans in their chutes.

"I cranked to the left, pulled up and rolled back right, ending up a bit higher than the MiG and in a nose down, right bank pursuit curve. The enemy pilot was concentrating on killing out pilots in their chutes and didn't see us."

Thorsness zoomed in on the MiG at 500 miles per hour, but his burst from his Gatling gun missed. Now he was slightly below the MiG, but still about 700 feet behind him.

"I pulled the trigger again. This time I saw his wing come apart."

The elation of seeing the MiG crash to the ground was quickly overcome when Johnson called, "Leo, we've got a MiG on our ass!"

"I snapped my head left and saw the belly of a MiG about 1,000 feet back – a bad sight. If he were a good pilot, we were dead."

Thorsness snapped to the right and kicked in the afterburner. The enemy aircraft fired, but its bullets missed. As the Weasel went supersonic, the MiG gave up the fight.

Thorsness took inventory of his situation. His missile and his bombs were gone, and he was low on bullets. He was also running out of gas.

He radioed in the position of the downed pilots and headed for an American air tanker in a safe area. He was told that two A1E Skyraiders, nicknamed Sandys, and a helicopter were on their way to the site.

This would be the closest to Hanoi that a rescue mission had ever been attempted.

Thorsness radioed the Sandys, World War II aircraft that were used because they could fly just over the treetops and absorb a lot of punishment, that MiGs were in the area and that the downed pilots were also within SAM range.

The job of the two Skyraiders was to make contact with the downed pilots, protect them if possible, and guide the helicopter in for a rescue.

As he was being refueled, Thorsness learned that all of the other 105s in the mission had headed home. He had a short conversation with Johnson. "Harry, if we go back, we go it alone." Thorsness wrote: "Harry didn't object when I turned back toward Vietnam."

"As we headed in, the knot in my stomach tightened. I had promised myself never to lose a wingman in combat. I had failed."

Thorsness kept trying to get his wingman on the radio, but the weak transmission he got back was unintelligible.

At 18,000 feet, the Wild Weasel came back over the site where the pilots had bailed out. "Leo, MiG at eight o'clock!" Johnson shouted. Thorsness also saw another MiG at about 11 o'clock, just to the left of where they were headed.

"We had flown right into a 'wagon wheel,' four or five MiGs in a large circle orbiting the downed pilots." Thorsness picked out one of the enemy fighters and squeezed off the last of his ammunition. Pieces flew off the MiG. Thorsness, whose gun camera had run out of film, was later credited with a "probable kill."

Now it was time for evasion, and the 105 again hit the afterburner until the MiGs disappeared in the rear view mirror. Again Thorsness warned the Sandys about the MiGs in the area. And he headed back to the scene.

When he got near the crash site, he began trying to make contact again with the downed airmen. Instead, he got a high-pitched transmission, "Sandy 1 is going in. Sandy 1 is going in. MiGs got him."

Thorsness radioed the remaining Sandy, "Get on the treetops. Get as low and slow as you can, turn as hard as you can, and the MiGs can't get you." The Sandy pilot radioed back. "Copy, I'll try. Okay but hurry, there's at least four of them."

"I dropped our nose toward the trees," Thorsness said, "grabbed about 600 miles per hour and wondered what I do when we got there."

He aimed his screaming fighter first at one MiG, then pulled up and aimed at another one. "My hope was that they'd think I was armed... If they believed that, maybe they'd let go of the Sandy, at least temporarily, and concentrate on killing us."

The improvised scheme worked, and all four MiGs focused on getting the Thud. The Skyraider was able to scoot through a valley and find safety.

Thorsness and Johnson were now in afterburner again, twisting and turning through the mountains at treetop level. "By now fuel was critical. We kept calling the tanker for a rendezvous."

Both the remaining Sandy and the helicopter were withdrawn. "The rescue attempt had failed. I had lost my wingmen. I wondered what I would write their wives."

He kept trying to contact the tanker when he got a surprise message, "Leo, Panda 4 here. I've got 600 pounds (of fuel – almost an empty tank) and I'm lost. Can you help?"

Thorsness was first shocked that another pilot would use his name, a no-no in a combat situation. He would learn later that a flight of the 105D fighters had made a strike attempt at the crash scene, and had shot down two more MiGs. But one of the fighters had got separated, was lost and about to run out of gas.

Thorsness radioed: "Tanker 1, you have six minutes to rendezvous with Panda 4 or he ejects. You gotta come further north." The tanker radioed back that he would do what he could.

Meanwhile Thorsness and Johnson talked over their own fuel situation, which was also critical. They decided that



Major Leo Thorsness and Captain Harold Johnson pose next to their F-105 in Thailand. Mustaches were popular at that time for pilots.

they had just enough fuel to make it over the Mekong River where they could eject in friendly Thailand.

If Panda 4 didn't refuel, he would have to eject over enemy territory. "It was an easy choice. The tanker belonged to Panda."

Still, Thorsness had to finesse the last drops of fuel to make it happen. He brought the Thud up to 35,000 feet and aimed the aircraft at Udorn Field, 30 miles beyond the Mekong River. He then cut the throttle and began gliding toward the airstrip.

"Luck was on our side. With fuel indicating empty, the engine ran until we got to Udorn, turned straight in on the southeast headed runway and landed. Just after we touched down, the engine shut down."

Harry said, matter of factly, "That was a full day's work."

It had been an interesting day. Thorsness had bombed a SAM site, shot down two MiGs in an aircraft not designed for aerial combat, protected another aircraft and then let another comrade use a tanker, knowing that he too was critically low on fuel.

"But as I retracted the canopy and stepped out of the plane, I felt like a failure, dejected at leaving two good men behind in the jungles of North Vietnam. If someone had told me I would receive the Medal of Honor for this mission, I would not have believed him."

But earn it he did. The citation says, in part: "Lieutenant Colonel Thorsness' extraordinary heroism, self sacrifice and personal bravery involving conspicuous risk of life where in the highest traditions of the military service, and have reflected great credit upon himself and the U.S. Air Force."

Harry Johnson received the Air Force Cross.

For most people who survive the event of their Medal of Honor, a lifetime of recognition lies ahead. For Thorsness, 11 days later he and Johnson were shot down over North Vietnam and spent the next six years in a series of brutal prison camps including the Hanoi Hilton.

Free at last in 1973, he wanted to stay in the Air Force, but the injuries he received while ejecting and the torture in the camps had disqualified him medically from further flying.

He later served as director of civic affairs for Litton Industries. Thorsness also tried politics, and took on Sen. George McGovern in South Dakota in 1974, losing by less than four percent. He tried again, this time for Congress from South Dakota, and lost to Tom Daschle by 139 votes out of nearly 130,000 votes cast.

He finally found election success after moving to Washington state when he was elected a state senator in 1988. Four years later, he lost in the primary election.

Thorsness then retired. He was 56 years old. He wrote his book in 2008 and he has been active in the Medal of Honor Society, serving on its board for many years.

He and Gaylee live in Florida.



The patch for the Wild Weasels, a group whose task it was to take out surface-to-air missile sites in North Vietnam, had the initials YGBSM at the bottom. It meant, "You Gotta Be S---ing Me."

Hospital Association elects two new members at annual meeting

The Minnesota American Legion Family Hospital Association elected two new members and changed its bylaws at the annual meeting in Marshall. Alberta Marth-Wohlfeil, New Ulm, was elected to the Legion slot on the association's board, and Sharon Thiemecke, Bemidji, was elected to the Auxiliary slot. Marth defeated Reuben Nathe of Litchfield. Leaving the board will be Marland Ronning, 10th District, and Jan Walker, 10th District. Their departure was partly due to a change in how board members were elected. The new rules say

only two people can serve from any one district. Leading up to this meeting there were four members from the 10th District. The change didn't come easily. Ronning read and moved a resolution that called for the two-per-district rule -- excluding the automatic positions on the board from the three organizations. Two members of the board, Dennis Blue and Nick Kakos, immediately spoke against the resolution saying that the board had no prior knowledge that it would be brought up at this meeting. It was defeated on a

voice vote. Linda Propenske, however, after asking the Judge Advocate Tom Lannon for a ruling, moved the exact wording from the floor. It was passed. Marie Goede, president of the Association, said, "It will be good to get others involved and spread the word throughout the Department about the good work we do." The new bylaws would not affect those whose terms were continuing this year. Both Ronning and Walker's terms were expiring. Those attending the annual meeting learned that

there were 38 claims processed by the Association this year, compared to only 17 last year. The claims totaled \$49,000 for the year, up from \$23,000 last year. There were also \$17,000 in operating expenses for the Association. In all, the Hospital Association raised \$46,000 for the year, and the total in the bank is \$241,000 a drop of about \$20,000 from last year. The districts' share of the payouts for claims varied widely, ranging from \$8,900 for the First District to \$258 for the Fifth District.



ALBERTA MARTH-WOHLFEIL



SHARON THIEMECKE

-- Notes from the Fall Conference --

The 2016 Fall Conference was held at Marshall. Some of the news from the conference included:

- Richard Wog presented a report to the Department Executive Committee from the Strategic Planning Committee that included a request that membership in the Department's Post 1982, the holding post for the Department, be transferred back to the posts every three to four weeks. The committee approved the action.
- The DEC heard a presentation from Dave Jenkins of the PCI company. The company makes books that are sold to associations and organizations that contain biographical information about members. The company would create the book and sell it for \$99. A share of the money would come back to the Department. The DEC took no action on the request, but it was later approved by the Finance Committee.
- Two resolutions pertaining to rehabilitation were passed by the DEC. Both will go to the Department Convention in 2017. One dealt with power of attorney for veterans in the VA system, and the other dealt with time limits for rating decision reviews.
- About 80 Legion members gathered at the Marshall Post and did an awareness walk. Clad in bright yellow t-shirts, the group walked about four blocks to the city's 911 memorial. The walk was led by National Commander Candidate Denise Rohan and Department Commander Denise Milton. Both spoke at the memorial and a moment of silence was observed. The *Marshall Independent* covered the walk.
- MDVA Commissioner Larry Shellito told the Legion that the Minnesota Veterans Home project at Minneapolis was on schedule and on budget. He said Bemidji and Montevideo are vying for new veterans homes for Minnesota. Minnesota is allowed to have 143 more beds by federal law.



MARCY SCHOOL PROGRAM -- Representation from the American Legion Riders, the Minnesota American Legion, the Sons of the American Legion and the Auxiliary help put on a patriotic program and flag donation at Marcy School in Minneapolis. The program was planned by Dave Adam.

- Jeremy Wolfsteller, the Department's service office, gave a talk on how the Legion is trying to help veterans who received a less-than-honorable discharge due to PTSD reasons to have that discharge upgraded. Wolfsteller said the success rate has become much higher in recent years.
- Jim Kellogg and Ray DeZurik asked posts to have greater participation in the Centennial website's history page. Posts can put information about their history, timeline and events on the national site. Kellogg also said Minnesota should have a booth at the Reno National Convention this coming year.
- Baseball Director Mike Perry said there would be zero tolerance for players not standing for the national anthem this year. He also said that Legion would be going to pitch counts rather than innings pitched to assure that players do not overtax their arms.
- Lloyd Ricker reported what the five veterans homes will use the \$5,000 from the Minnesota American Legion Foundation for. Silver Bay will build a band shell, Luverne will improve shading in the dementia area, Fergus Falls will

- make a greenhouse, Minneapolis will develop a circle of flags, and Hastings will buy a bus to transport patients.
- Wayne Gilbertson said Legionville accomplished several projects this past year including burying many electrical lines, and planting 1,000 seedlings. The Conservation Committee provided the seedlings and the Junior Auxiliary members planted them. The SAL announced that the Camp-O-Ree had earned \$7,283 for Legionville.
- Pat Logan, Convention Corporation, announced that the 2017 Department Convention will be back in Mahanomen at the Shooting Star Casino. He said the entire convention will be under one roof. In 2018, the convention will be in Rochester.
- The Auxiliary's silent auction raised \$4,300.
- Membership Director Mark Dvorak said Minnesota was in second place in the nation to Wisconsin, trailing by only a fraction of a percentage point. He said four districts in the state were fighting for the top position at this time.

Thorsness

Continued from Page 9

days or so, the guards would have the prisoners strip naked and go outside leaving everything in the cell. The guards would then hunt through the prisoner's clothing, bedding and meager possessions looking for contraband. "We told Mike that no matter how tough he was, he couldn't keep that flag. But he didn't listen." The North Vietnamese found the ragged Star Spangled Banner. "The beating started in the morning and continued through mid-day. It was brutal, it was terrible. When he came back to the cell, he couldn't talk. He couldn't talk for a week. "But the first thing he did when he could move his fingers was to find another scrap of cloth and begin another flag. "So when I see people not respecting the flag..." He told the story about how he learned he had been nominated for the Medal of Honor about two years into his captivity through the prisoner's tap code, a Morse code-like communication that could move from cell wall to cell wall. And how when he finally got home, the government went through the process of determining whether he should get it again. "There were 350 prisoners, and about seven of them became collaborators with the enemy. They didn't know who these guys were, and they wanted to make sure they didn't give the medal to a collaborator. They might have thought about me, 'After all, he's Norwegian...' The crowd laughed heartily. "In the end it was approved, but I'm the only person who got the Medal of Honor who had to go through the system

twice." Besides the tap code, the prisoners also had to listen to the enemy's version of the news. "They didn't understand the language very well, and so they would say, 'Here are the news.' If they only had one item, they'd say, 'Here is the new.'" "They'd always give us all the bad stuff. If 20 people had been killed in a flood, they'd say it was 20,000. In the casualty reports they gave us, they killed off the whole American army about three times. They told us about every anti-war protest. "But at least we got some news." The tap code could mean life or death for the prisoners. "They'd take a guy in for torture, and when he came back he'd tap out what the interrogators were after, and what he had to say to stop the torture. That meant a lot to the next guy they were taking in to torture." He said the prisoners got better and better at the code, which consisted of arranging the letters in the grid of 25, five by five, eliminating the letter K. "The Air Force guys could get up to 15 words a minute. The Navy pilots could maybe do ten words a minute," Thorsness said with a smile. "The Marine pilots, we'll we didn't even bother to teach them the tap code." Thorsness went into some additional detail about the ordeal of getting shot down that he hadn't told the kids. "Before we were hit, we reported there were MIGs in the area. But we got a radio message back from the F-4 Phantoms that were supposed to protect us. 'Have no fear, we're here.'" The American fighters' help, though, didn't prevent the missile strike on Thorsness' F-105 Thunderchief. "Harry and I had talked it over beforehand that if I ever said, 'Go'

he was to eject immediately. There would be no time to hesitate. So with the stick flopping around in my hand, I said 'Go' and he said 'Shit.' And then he was gone." What did the years in prison teach him, one of the local people asked. "I learned I was an average guy. In fact there was no one more average than I was. You learned yourself. You learned who you are. "I came out of the camp a better person, but maybe not six years better." When the day finally came to be released, he said there was a lot of suspicion among the Americans. "We wondered if it was a trick. They took us to the airport and put us in a hangar and gave us warm beer. That was a good sign." Finally the American transport plane showed up. "We were helped on the plane by the best looking nurses in the world. But you have to understand that we had not seen a female for six years. "When the plane broke ground, that was it. We finally knew we were going home." Thorsness had talked for about 45 minutes, leaning on the podium in the middle of the gym. But the welcome home was not over as dozens lined up to get a book signed, shake his hand, or share some experience from the past. The hero leaned hard on the podium through it all, but the smile never left his face, nor the joy from his countenance. He was home again. And then it was back to the long sidewalk for the walk to the waiting cars. Again he refused the cart. He strolled slowly down the walk, hand in hand with Gaylee.

District Commanders

FIRST DISTRICT

Sylvan Fix
Commander



October was another fun and busy month. My thanks to Lake City Post for hosting our Fall Americanism/Membership Rally October 1st. We started out the day with bowling for about two hours with the kids. This included some of us big kids as well. Kids always seem to add that little spark of excitement and fun. We then started the meeting and talked about several of the programs within Americanism. The program went well. Thanks to La Crescent Post for hosting our Fall Conference October 15th and the wonderful steak fry afterwards. Since Junior Shooting Sports is my project for the year we had our Junior Sports Chairman Michael Toban provide us with a demonstration of a rifle and target and fill us in on financial or other obligations there may be. Get out and vote and have a Great Veterans Day. God Bless.

SECOND DISTRICT

Mark Coney
Commander



November has quickly arrived as we see cooler temperatures, leaves dropping off the trees, the harvest is well under way, and there has even been frost reported in the area. November is a very important month this year. First, in just a few days we will be heading to the polls to elect a new President and all the way down to the local City Hall and Commissioners. Please exercise your right and duty to vote this year. We are fortunate to live in a country where we have such liberties as the right to vote without the fear of retributions. So please, get out and vote on Nov. 8th.

On Veteran's Day we will take time to remember and say "Thank You" to all veterans both young and old. Those who are alive, and those who have given the ultimate sacrifice to protect our freedom including those who have not returned or been accounted for. That is what makes this country so great. We have come together in the time of need to fight for what we felt was right and to protect our way of life. Let us not forget our veterans on November 11th. Please keep those currently deployed in your close thoughts and prayers. Finally, we will celebrate Thanksgiving where we give thanks for many things. The families will come together and catch up on distant relatives. If you plan on traveling for Thanksgiving, please be safe.

I would like to welcome the third chapter in the Second District of the American Legion Riders. This has been in the making for a few years, but now it is a reality. The chapter is tentatively scheduled to be based in either Rock or Pipestone counties but will encompass the Southwest area of the state. This is open to all Legion Family members who ride and would like to bond with your fellow Legion family members. If you would like to join, feel free to contact me at (507) 669-2006.

Thank you for everything that you do and have a safe November.

THIRD DISTRICT

Mike Maxa
Commander



Hello "Thundering Third" How are you getting the word out on the work your post is accomplishing? Are you placing articles in your local paper? A fund raiser is happening at the post to support our Veterans, youth, and community, how are you advertising? Legion family how do you find information on the events happening at your post or neighboring posts? If your post doesn't have a web-site, you might want to look into developing one. Your post web-site is information at your finger tips and will keep your members informed on events at your post and The American Legion. The web-site is a powerful tool keeping you in touch with your post. Our young Veterans use social media to stay connected in their world. Facebook is widely used and this is where our young Veterans are communicating and search to find the happening's around them. If we want these young Veterans to join us, we better change with the times or we will be left behind. It is amazing that the device you hold in the palm of your hand can find information, locations, happenings, and buy stuff. My bride and I don't argue anymore, I google it and show her the results and once again I was right.... Take a hard look at having a post web-site or Facebook page to get your story out. If you already have a web-site page or Facebook, is it current? Take an inventory of your site and keep it fresh and up to date. Finally have you registered your post at www.centennial.legion.org for the 100 year anniversary? Please do, we want a 100% participation. "Ask" a Veteran to join and the Legion family will grow.

FIFTH DISTRICT

Ray Eiden
Commander



October was a busy month topped off with our Fall Conference in Marshall Oct. 28-29.

On October 5th I attended the Medal of Honor ceremony at US Bank stadium. I felt fortunate to be in the presence of such brave veterans. There were about 35 present out of 77 living recipients. Our District received a proclamation from Minneapolis mayor Betsy Hodges. The proclamation, signed by Mayor Hodges, proclaimed Friday, Sept. 16, 2016 as American Legion Day in the City of Minneapolis, which was the site of the Legion's first convention in 1919. Our membership revitalization will be held Nov. 17-19 at Richfield Post #435. I will be encouraging all our Posts to get involved to make this event a success. After a slow start the 5th District is gaining on their renewals. We are still behind last year at this time so there can't be any letdown.

At our October District Assembly we voted to develop a website. This website will be for the entire Legion family; legionnaires, auxiliary, SAL and ALR. This will give our District good exposure and hopefully boost our membership.

We will have a District Family Fundraiser on Dec. 4th. It will be a pancake and sausage breakfast from 8:00 a.m. to noon at Wold Chamberlain Post #99.

Remember to honor our veterans on Veteran's Day. Say a prayer for those serving overseas and their families.

Coming up: District Hospital Visitation - Nov. 6 at 2:00 p.m.

FOURTH DISTRICT

Randy Bastyr
Commander



Greetings to all members of the Fabulous Fourth. Can you believe that it's already the beginning of November? The MN Deer hunting season opens on the 5th. If you're heading out into the woods like me, please be careful and return home safe and sound. Good luck to all.

Last month we slipped to 9th place in the membership race. Please send your membership renewals into your Post so they can be sent in. Membership Chairman Mickey Ostrum wants every Post to get those renewals in weekly. Please don't hold them.

The Shop, Ship and Share Committee is working hard on this year's event, to be held at the Maplewood Mall on December 2nd & 3rd. We are looking for names and addresses of Minnesota service men and women that will be deployed over Christmas and New Year's. If you know of someone we could send a care package to, please forward their name, company and address to me at: r-bastyr@comcast.net. Donations can be sent to the "Shop, Ship and Share, PO Box 17035, St. Paul, MN 55117-0035

Upcoming District events: November 9th - RCCC at Arcade-Phalen Post 577, Executive Board @ 6:30 and Membership meeting @ 7:00; November 15th -Shop, Ship and Share meeting at NSP Post 39 @ 5:30, November 16th - Membership Rally at Rosetown @ 7:00; and November 20th - Hospital visitation @ 12:30.

Thank you all for this opportunity to serve the Fabulous Fourth District.

Happy Thanksgiving!

SIXTH DISTRICT

Vernonica Fernlund
Commander



I can't believe we are already into November and the start of the holiday season. Our membership year is close to half over.

Congratulations to the 6th District for not ending up with the "Leg" award at the 6th & 9th District Membership rally. It was an honor to attend several membership dinners throughout the District in October.

I have received several generous donations for our District project. The project is to raise funds for a passenger golf cart for the St. Cloud VA. Thank you to all the posts who have donated. We have been bouncing near the top for membership.

Keep "pouring" in the membership to keep us floating on top. Saturday Nov. 19, 2016 the 6th District will have a holiday/membership rally at Brainerd American Legion Post 255 starting at 5:00 pm. Everyone is welcome, I heard Santa might even attend.

Friday Nov. 11, 2016, I will be attending the Veterans Day Ceremony at the St. Cloud VA.

I wish everyone a Happy Thanksgiving.

SEVENTH DISTRICT

Garylee Davenport
Commander



Greetings Mighty 7th.

I hope that everyone is doing well. October has been a very busy month. I attended two 7th District Membership Rally's. The first Rally was held in Montevideo on October 1st and the second rally was in Glenwood on October 15th where there were more in attendance. I would like to say "Thank You" to the Montevideo & Glenwood Posts for hosting the Rally's. If anyone would like me to attend one of your post meeting, please feel free to give me a call.

We are in the process of setting up dates to do area revitalizations, so if you are interested in doing one, you can call me or my Membership Director Richard Wog.

A big thank you to Marshall Post 113 for hosting the Department Fall Conference. Hopefully everyone had an enjoyable time, a fun learning experience and gained some knowledge from this event.

The 7th is currently in 4th place. Keep up the good work and look towards 1st place. I know we can do it. I have faith in the 7th.

And last, but not least, Membership, Membership, Membership.

NINTH DISTRICT

Eric Wilkens
Commander



Greetings from the Roaring Ninth. As we enter November we have put a few big milestones behind us such as the 55% target, the Kaisersatt Derby, and the infamous leg between the 6th and 9th.

Unfortunately, the 9th will keep the leg although it was a close contest this year. November will bring another goal with 65% target on November 16th. Second membership notices have been sent and I hope all Posts are seeing more renewals coming in.

Just as important as renewals is recruiting new members. Our weakest demographic is those veterans who have served from the Gulf War to today. I encourage each member of the Legion to recruit one new member this year. Just think how many we could gain with that simple goal. I have already recruited 3 new Legion and 3 SAL members this year so I know it can be done.

November also brings three additional important events, Election Day, Veterans Day and Thanksgiving. Regardless of your stance, I encourage everyone to vote as there is plenty at stake in all levels of government.

I also encourage everyone to take part in a Veterans Day event and remind our communities the important role veterans play. Then take time from the hustle and bustle of life and spend a day being thankful for all we have in this great country.

Until next month, keep doing the great things you do for The American Legion and fellow veterans.

TENTH DISTRICT

Bonnie Hanson
Commander



When you read this we will have finished up at Fall Conference in Marshall. Hope we have many new members that are coming to see how we as the American Legion are getting the message out about who we are and what we are about.

Please bring this Leadership back to your Post. Membership is what we need to continue in. We just finished up with our first revitalization of the year. First I want to thank Cambridge for having us in their Post to do the calling and then to the volunteers that helped make the calls and then a big one for the District's Membership Chairman Paul Orson. We will be having another one in early February. I want to thank the St. Cloud VA and the Minneapolis VA for the invitations for the Pheasants Luncheon and how tasty they are.

Now we have Veterans Day coming up where we honor all Veterans living and those that have given their lives so that we can live in a free country.

We have the Rallies both in the Department and Districts. We are working hard on getting those membership's in, calling the members that sign up on-line and ones that haven't paid for the last couple years. Most of the time they do want to talk with someone.

Remember motto is "Family First." Hope to see you all down the line.

World War II History Round Table

Only 1 Airborne division served in Pacific

By Al Zdon

During World War II, there were five Airborne divisions.

Four of those fought in the European war, and two of them, the 82nd and the 101st, became well known because of their action at the D-Day landings, Operation Market Garden and the Battle of the Bulge.

The one parachute/glider division that went to fight the other war was the 11th Airborne.

Gerard Devlin, author of *Paratrooper*, and veteran Victor Liptrap, who fought with the 11th Airborne, gave the World War II Round Table audience at Fort Snelling a history lesson in October.

Devlin, a decorated paratrooper himself and author of several books on Airborne history, said the fact that only one paratrooper division went to the Pacific reflected the preoccupation of the American military with winning the European war first.

"They wanted to do Germany first and then take on Japan."

Devlin said each Airborne division was made up of one regiment of paratroopers and two regiments of glider troops.

"The idea was that the paratrooper would go in first and secure the area, knock down the telephone poles and so forth, and then the two glider regiments would come in."

The division was commanded by Maj. Gen. Joseph Swing, who, Devlin said, was highly regarded by his troops. "He was one of the class of 1915 at West Point, the class they said 'the stars fell on' because so many in that class excelled in World War II. Eisenhower was part of that class and a close friend of Gen. Swing."

The Division was formed in 1943, and was the principal unit in a practice drop called the Knollwood Maneuver in Louisiana. The Army was considering eliminating division-sized Airborne units, but the maneuver went so well, that Eisenhower kept them as part of his Army.

The 11th headed overseas to Papua New Guinea in late May, 1944, for more training and to learn jungle fighting.

Its first action in November was in Leyte in the Philippines, but it was brought to battle in transport ships rather than transport planes.

The terrain was rugged and full of jungle and it rained constantly causing problems in advancing and in being resupplied when it did advance. The Japanese resistance was fierce. The 511th Parachute Infantry Regiment, in the lead of the operation, resorted to using Piper Cubs for re-supply.

By mid-December, 1944, the 11th Airborne broke through to the western shoreline of Leyte. The parachute regiment was relieved on Christmas day by the two glider regiments, who also incurred heavy losses against the entrenched enemy.

By mid-January, the 511th was back at its base camp on Leyte getting ready for the next push – this time north to the large island of Luzon. The glider units went by ship to Mindoro, an island just to the west of Luzon, and the 511th got ready to do its first combat jump.

One glider regiment, the 188th, landed in southern Luzon on Jan. 31, 1945, and pushed inland. Later in the day, the other glider regiment, the 187th, also landed. The glider units broke through three Japanese defense lines and by Feb. 3, they were in the vicinity of Tagaytay Ridge.

The ridge was the goal of the parachute regiment. The 511th only had 47 C-47s at its disposal (compare to Operation Market Garden in Holland where the Allies employed over 1,400 C-47s) and so the regiment had to make its landing in three waves.

The first wave landed in the drop zone on top of the ridge, but the second wave was dropped prematurely and landed about five miles east of the ridge. The third wave also had problems and three-fourths of its troopers were dropped well short of the drop zone.

Still within five hours, the entire 511th was assembled on the ridge. By three in the afternoon, all three regiments were in contact and fighting as one. The division began advancing toward its ultimate goal: Manila.

The Japanese had had ample time to prepare for the attack, and had built the Genko Line, consisting of over 1,200 large blockhouses using naval guns or large mortars plus machine guns and booby traps. Over 6,000 Japanese were dug in around Manila.

"The Japanese planned to hold out to the last bullet, and then blow up whatever was left," Devlin said.

The regiments of the 11th Airborne took turns leading the assault, and finally broke through the Genko Line. By Feb. 12, the line was breached, and the Airborne fighters headed for Japanese defensive units close to the city.

The 511th led a break-in at a key fort, and on Feb. 18, the Americans entered Manila. Fighting went on sporadically for another two weeks.

"Manila had been a beautiful city, modeled after Washington D.C.," Devlin said. "It had beautiful marble buildings and elegant hotels. By the time it was retaken, it was nothing but a pile of rubble on the streets."

The Japanese had interred thousands of civilians in camps on Luzon, and the largest was at a college campus in Los Banos, about 40 miles from Manila. On Feb. 21, a platoon of paratroopers secured a landing zone near the camp.

On the morning of the 23rd, B Company of 511th dropped into the landing zone while the platoon that had secured the zone attacked the camp. At the same time, an amphibious assault was made from a nearby lake using Amtraks. Other parts of the 11th Airborne advanced down a highway leading to the camp and prevented Japanese counter measures.

By three in the afternoon, the Airborne forces withdrew, having freed over 2,000 civilians prisoners. It was one of the most successful raids of the war.

The division then was tasked with taking on the entrenched Japanese south of Luzon, which they did.

The last Japanese forces on Luzon were now in the north, and as the Army drove to reach them, a team of the 511th was dropped on June 21 on the other side of the Japanese stronghold, and began advancing south.

They linked up with the other American divisions three days later. It was the last combat action for the division in the war.

"The 511th fought as long and as hard as any infantry division in Europe, but how many books do you read about the battle for Manila?" Devlin asked.

The 11th Airborne then did occupation duty in Japan, first at Yokohama. "There was a popular song during World War II," Devlin said. "It was, 'Good bye mama, I've off to Yokohama.'"

Later the division served up north on the island of Hokkaido. It went back to the United States in 1949.

Victor Liptrap grew up in Wichita, Kansas, and went into the Army when he was 17 years old. "I fudged a little on my birth date," he told the Round Table listeners.

He did basic training in California, and then signed up to be a paratrooper. Why? "It was \$50 more a month."

Training was at Fort Benning in Georgia. "The training was quite rigid. We worked very hard."

He remembers his first jump. "I know I didn't sleep at all the night before. We jumped two times that first day, and then we did three more jumps later, including a night jump. And then we got our wings."

Liptrap was sent to New Guinea, a 28-day boat trip, and despite his Airborne training, was assigned to a replacement depot where he spent two or three months. "We spent four weeks in training learning how to rig parachutes."

The rest of the time on Goodenough Island was waiting. "We didn't have anything to do. There were a lot of trucks available and so we could go around the island. There was a really good swimming hole at the end of the island. But mostly we'd just sit in our tents and watch the rain."

For a while, he was assigned to a unit that handled ammunition and drove trucks. Finally he decided it was time to get into the war.

"There were three of us, and we were young and we thought we should be doing something over there, so we volunteered for the 511th Parachute Infantry Regiment."

They were sent to Leyte, and part of their job was to bring supplies to the 511th PIR.

"We had to cross a river which was between our camp and where the 511th was fighting. To do this, we would put the trucks on an LST which would take us around the river."

"We had two trucks loaded with ammo, but the other truck got swamped. So I had to tow the other truck 10 miles up into the mountains. Then we came back. I asked a Filipino where the boat was, but he took me down to the river where his dugout canoe was."

That was no help, and Liptrap and his comrade went back to the trucks. "We had to back them out, but we hit one end of a truck on the end of a hut, and it moved the hood a bit. The people from all over the village came and were standing around. We spent the night in the trucks."

"In the morning, we took that dugout canoe across the river. The trucks stayed there."

Liptrap was then stationed at an airfield the Americans had seized from the Japanese, and it was expected, he said, that the Japanese would try to recapture it. After five days of waiting, the Japanese mounted its own parachute assault on the airfield.

"They came in just before dark and took over the strip and started burning our airplanes. The next morning, the 511th came in and cleared off the field."

The jump onto Tagaytay Ridge on Luzon was next up. Liptrap was in the group that didn't quite make it. "We landed down in the valley beside the ridge. We had to go five miles to get up on the ridge, and it was steep. One of our buddies broke his ankle, and we had to take turns carrying him up there. We were pretty fatigued by the time we made it."

Without much rest, though, the 511th went into combat working its way toward Manila.

"We were told that there were a bunch of Japanese in a



Moderator Doug Bekke interviews Airborne veteran Victor Liptrap as historian Gerard Devlin looks on.

schoolhouse down the road. We had four Jeeps with trucks following us going down a wooded lane to the school house.

"We sneaked up on them. They were just getting up and they were in the yard with washbasins, shaving and bathing. It was my first taste of combat."

Liptrap's Company F encountered many of the pillboxes with naval guns and mortars. "Some we could take out ourselves, but for one we called up a tank. One of our guys told the tank driver to back up a little bit, and he backed over a 500 lb. mine. It destroyed the tank, but the driver was only injured. He went back to the aid station, and on the bunk next to him was the guy who had told him to back the tank up."

The 511th finally made it into Manila. "It was pretty much on fire when we got there." The regiment was the first to enter the city, along with the 1st Cavalry Division.

When the call came for the 511th to make a raid to the Los Banos prison camp, the leadership was about to pick Liptrap's Company F for the honor, but instead chose Company B. "We'd had more casualties at that point, and so they picked the other company."

As the 511th was mopping up an area south of Manila, there was one incident Liptrap remembers well. "The day before I had been lead scout going down the trail, but that day I was back in the line a little bit. We were walking on a trail alongside a ridge and we couldn't see ahead. Suddenly a machine gun opened up in front of us. It was a good thing I wasn't the scout that day."

"I had just passed a Japanese foxhole and I headed for it, but when I got there, the sergeant behind me and a Filipino soldier were already in it."

Liptrap had no resort but to just lie flat while the machine gun bullets sprayed over him. Meanwhile, a mortar was "walking" its way down the trail getting closer and closer.

"Finally one landed six feet from me. The next one would have got me, but that was the last shot they fired. I guess it was my lucky day."

Liptrap said that not all the Japanese fought to the death. "We came upon one soldier who had a bullet hole in his leg. They just sent him back. He made no attempt to do us any harm."

After the Philippines, the 11th Airborne was sent to Okinawa to prepare for the invasion of Japan. "I was just a buck private. I wasn't in on the planning. They showed us sand tables of an island that we were supposed to take that had 200 Japanese soldiers on it."

He said he and the others were happy when the atomic bombs were dropped and the Japanese surrendered. "We were all for that." They were immediately sent to Yokohama as occupation forces.

"I remember all the Japanese had were old American cars and trucks. The trucks ran on charcoal."

Liptrap became a driver, taking officers where they wanted to go. "A Russian general and a lieutenant wanted to go to Tokyo. We were told that was off limits, but I wasn't going to tell a general where he could go."

In Tokyo, they had to find the Russian embassy. "The Russian officers didn't speak any English or Japanese, and we had to ask people where to go. It was pretty confusing."

At last the embassy was located. "They asked me if I wanted breakfast and I said, 'Okay.' So they gave me a slice of apple pie and a glass of vodka."

Liptrap said generally, the Japanese "just kept quiet and were very polite. Except for one guy when we took his truck away from him. He wasn't very happy."

"I had a good time in Japan. The first week we were there was the best week I had in the service."

In January, 1946, Liptrap was discharged and went home to Wichita. The trip home by ship only took seven days.

He became a mechanic for Northwest Airlines, and later moved to Minnesota. His hobby has been skydiving, and he's done over 60 tandem jumps.

For the last four years, to celebrate their anniversary, Liptrap and his wife have gone skydiving. He's 91.



The Auxiliary Bulletin

No. 17-3

President Carol Kottom

November 2016

Secretary Sandie Deutsch

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

The President's Column

By
Carol Kottom



Greetings from the American Legion Auxiliary –

It was a privilege and a pleasure for me to get to present our newest unit, Bruno (out of my own 10th District), with their charter. The Legionnaires attended along with 2015-2016 10th District President Dawne Juhl and Department Secretary Sandie.

Let's see if we can get a few more going this year. Bruno has a dual member and they are already working on getting an active Junior group together. Gotta love it.

Thanks to Barnesville, Rosetown and Brainerd for the invitations to your events. President Jeanette Kava invited neighboring units to a luncheon and I had a great time visiting with the gals. President Sandy Gibson's unit had a wonderful Fall Fashion luncheon.

Our 4th District President Connie Anderson did quite the job modeling the Dress Barn fashions. Brainerd had the last survivor from the Bataan march there. What an honor to meet him. Also 5 of their Girl Staters spoke and I enjoyed visiting with them. It was fun to share my project and answer questions for those attending.

The 10th District Juniors also had their fall meeting and fun day. Shaaron Barnes, 10th District Commander Bonnie Hanson, 10th District President Linda Deschene, myself and a bunch more members held a "learn to crochet" class.

The concept is that the Juniors can make a baby blanket for the Honorary 10th District President Megan Bruzek's project. What a fun afternoon!

Mary Davis, our National President, had her homecoming in Seattle in October. Although I had a little trouble getting around, I did attend and enjoyed being there.

Sadly, our membership is not doing as well as I hoped. Buffalo's Post Commander, Robert Larson, who is also the Wright County Vice Commander, has vowed that he is going to get the Post, Unit and SAL all to their goals. How about your Legionnaires? Are they out there working membership for you?

Let's go out as a family and sign up the grandmothers, mothers, wives, daughters and granddaughters of our Legionnaires. When a new Legionnaire is signed up, have whoever is signing them up ask if they have family that would like to join the Auxiliary or the Sons.

Membership is a program that all members need to get involved in. It's not just a job for your membership chairman and/or your president. It's everybody's job. How about Christmas gifts? Pay for an existing member or sign up a new member for Christmas.

Do it now. Then you're shopping is done early.

Fall Conference is now in the past. Had a wonderful time and I hope everyone else did too.

Went to my first American Legion Family Hospital Association meeting and am looking forward to being active in the association.

First time for the Riders to participate in the Grand March. I hope they enjoyed the experience – they are a great group and I'm pleased they agreed to participate. Our Northwest Division National Vice President Virginia Nelsen attended the entire conference.

We were all glad to hear from her and enjoyed her being with us.

Remember to always "Thank a Veteran".

And as we did in kindergarten – "When you go out into the world, it is best to hold hands and stick together."

Until next month –

Auxiliary receives two \$10,000 checks for projects

The 84th annual Fall Conference was held in Marshall, Minnesota, with The Ramada Inn being the host hotel, our Auxiliary Conference at Southwest State University and the Joint Session with The American Legion Family being held at the Red Baron Arena. The Conference was sponsored by the Marshall American Legion Family 113. The Auxiliary was blessed this year with a \$10,000.00 grant from the Veterans for Veterans Foundation to be used in our annual Gift Shop and also the \$5.00 bill shower. A presentation was made to President Carol Kottom by Don Pankake and Marland Ronning from the V4V Board. We also received a check in the amount of \$10,000.00 to be used for our Veterans from the Pheasant Dinner fund. Chuck Stone presented this to President Carol as well. There aren't enough thank yous to shout out to both of these groups. This will ensure that we have funds to make our Veterans Christmas very bright this year.

Donna Redepenning and her crew had a very successful Silent Auction with benefits the American Legion Auxiliary Emergency Fund which is Auxiliary members helping their own. The final tally hasn't been totaled but it will be around the \$4,500.00 mark. Again – thanks to all who donated items and especially to those who upped those bids. This is another area where it makes one proud to be a member, seeing all of The American Legion Family supporting this cause.

HAPPY 97th BIRTHDAY

Does your Unit know November is "birthday month" for the American Legion Auxiliary? Will your Unit be celebrating? It was November 10, 1919, when the American Legion Auxiliary was established by a resolution adopted at the first National Convention of The American Legion here in Minneapolis. Since then the Auxiliary has grown to around 9000 Units and over 600,000 members. This November is the American Legion Auxiliary's 97th birthday. We hope you are planning a celebration in your Unit. Do something fun and memorable as a Unit.

2017 POPPY ORDERS

Orders for our 2017 Poppies are being accepted. Prices for small poppies are remaining the same as last year. An order form was included in the first Unit mailing. Poppy prices: Small Poppies - \$180.00 a thousand (\$18.00 a hundred) for orders of 500 or less; large Poppies - \$18.00 a dozen and the Poppy Window Display cards are \$.50 each while supplies last. Remember that the Department Office no longer has any of the Poppy Display cards. You must either order what Emblem Sales offers or come up with your own creative way to make the displays. The 2017 Poppy orders will be shipped on the dates requested on the orders. When you receive your Poppies, please store them in a safe place so they aren't inadvertently thrown away or wrapped up as a holiday gift. Please check your order upon receipt and report any discrepancies to the Department office.

The Department Office wants to assure you that the Poppies this year are very well made. Our Veterans at the Hastings Veterans Home has been working very hard, along with a few individual Veterans here in Minnesota. As of right now, 93 Units have already placed their Poppy order. We would love to have a 100% participation this year.

PEARL HARBOR RALLY

The Pearl Harbor Membership Rally will be held at the Waite Park American Legion Post 428 on Saturday, December 3rd. Turn in 3-4:30 p.m., with dinner at 5 and program to follow. Your District President and Membership Chairman asks every Unit to have membership ready to be picked up when they or a Legion representative comes to your area. Check with your Post Commander for your pick-up day and time.

Please do not hold membership in your Unit. Mail your transmittals on a regular basis. Just be prepared to give those last minute memberships to the representative who comes to pick them up for the rally.

Let's make this a special Holiday Season for our Department President Sandy and Membership Chairman

Zandy as we continue to improve our membership counts. We had a great turn in at Fall Conference and need to keep up with all of the Department goals that have been set. Your Unit can win some cash for just working that membership and meeting goals. If you need any assistance, please do not hesitate to contact Chairman Zandy Kessler or the Department Office.

CHRISTMAS GIFT SHOP

The Department Office and the Hospital and Home Representatives want to give a big thank you to the Units and Posts that have contributed funds to our Gift Shop program. Again this year, the veterans at the four VA Medical Centers and the five Minnesota Veterans Homes will be selecting gifts for their loved ones through our Gift Shop program. About 2,000 veterans participate in this program. A huge change this year for the Gift Shop is the amount that was approved by the Department Executive Committee to spend on our Veterans at the Gift Shop.

The Gift Shop committee has been busy shopping for the gifts and would appreciate your Unit's financial support of this program. Those who attended Fall Conference saw the nice quality and selection of items the veterans may choose from. Please include a generous cash donation in your Unit's annual budget and send it to the department office earmarked Gift Shop. Let's support our own Auxiliary programs first.

Donations to the Gift Shop are accepted all year. You may use Poppy funds and Gambling funds for this program. The Gift Shop is available to all veterans who are in the various facilities at the time of the Gift Shop including regular day care patients. The Gift Shop is chaired by Raleen Tolzmann and her committee member is Vida Bacon. They are both giving much of their time to make this a very successful event.

What is the Gift Shop? It is where volunteers of the American Legion Auxiliary work together, with the assistance of the Hospital and Home Representatives, to find out what types of gifts are appreciated and needed. Those items are purchased and delivered to the facilities.

Where does it Happen? The Gift Shops are set up in the Veterans Homes and Medical Centers all over the State of Minnesota. There are 9 facilities and with the assistance of the Hospital and Home Representatives there will be 9 different Gift Shops (see dates below).

Who does this help? This helps the Veterans and their families. It gives the Veterans a chance to get a gift that they don't expect and it gives them the ability to give their family members a gift as well.

Who can help? Any Auxiliary member, Auxiliary Junior member, Sons of the American Legion or Legionnaire themselves can volunteer. There are jobs for all ages during the Gift Shops. Please get in touch with your local representative and find out what you can do to help.

GIFT SHOP DATES

Our representatives have announced the date(s) of their Gift Shop at their respective facility.

Fargo VAMC	December 5
Minneapolis VAMC	December 6 & 7
Sioux Falls VAMC	December 15
St. Cloud VAMC	November 28 - 30
Fergus Falls VA Home	December 19
Hastings VA Home	December 8
Luverne VA Home	December 8
Minneapolis VA Home	December 7 & 8
Silver Bay VA Home	December 8

MEMBERSHIP SUPPLIES

If your Unit is in need of additional membership supplies, i.e., application forms, transmittal sheets, membership cards, etc., please send your order to the department office. All supplies are sent from the office upon request.

SEWING NEEDS

Included in the November/December Unit mailing were the sewing patterns of items needed at the various hospitals/homes. Home Service Chairmen please ask your Unit

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Continued from Preceding Page

President for these items.

Remember: Times are changing; needs are changing. Please make only those items that are requested by our Representatives to meet the needs of our veterans. Send all completed items to the facility that has requested them in care of our Representative there. Make sure and contact the Representative before bringing items to the facility to make sure they are in need of the items at that time. They don't have a lot of space for storage so it is very important to contact them.

If your Unit has an active sewing group, may we suggest you contact your local nursing home, shut-ins, etc. within your own community and "sew for them". Many of these local facilities and their needs are overlooked by our Units and could certainly use your sewing talents.

SECRETARY SANDIE'S NOTES

By the time you are reading this we will have another Fall Conference under our belts. I hope many of you attended. It was a very memorable conference. What a warm feeling it leaves seeing our entire American Legion Family working together and enjoying each other's company. The Silent Auction was awesome and as usual there are (3) huge baskets sitting on my kitchen floor wondering, "What am I doing here?" My husband has the same sentiments. I just get all caught up in the bidding process and somehow hate to lose. I always tell myself it is for a wonderful cause; Auxiliary members helping other members in need.

We have been busy here in the Department Office as membership has finally started to come in. Very sincerely I would like to thank all of you who work so hard to recruit, renew and rejoin but I would also ask that everyone work just a little bit harder so we could make our goals set by National. National has listened to our members and dropped the 1,000,000 member march setting realistic goals this year. We already have some Units at 100%.

If you get a chance, visit one of the Gift Shops this year and offer to help. The Hospital/Home Reps can always use volunteer help. For me, helping at Hastings the past 3 years has been the most rewarding parts of being in this organization. This year I promised Mary Ann Davis I would be at the Minneapolis VAMCE to help her out. I can't wait. On the personal side of things, thanks to all Districts but especially my very own 3rd District for allowing me to partake in the cider taste testing contest at Fall Conference. Wasn't that a treat? It was right to bed for me after that.

Shorty and I did it again. We went shopping and got our retirement home on wheels. We decided that's the way we want to go when and if we are ever able to retire. We both wish all of you a very Happy Thanksgiving and to my family, Merry Christmas as well. We get to celebrate over Thanksgiving - it will be great having all our kids and grandkids together again.

My shout out this month is to the V4V Board, especially Don Pankake and Marland Ronning and also Chuck Stone with the Pheasant Dinner group for the generous donations. It is a pleasure to work with these gentlemen, especially Don, I always get a few wisecracks out of him.



BRUNO NEW UNIT -- Above, charter members of the Bruno Unit 563, pose with their new charter. Below, President Carol Kottom, Bruno President Sandy Hoiland and Past 10th District President Dawne Juhl show off the new charter.



Oct. 28, 2016, Auxiliary Membership

District	Goal	Membership To Date	Percent of Goal	Membership Last Year
One	5,000	2,606	52.12%	2,432
Two	4,924	2,662	54.06%	2,456
Three	4,411	2,410	54.64%	2,661
Four	720	408	56.67%	399
Five	824	436	52.91%	512
Six	6,042	3,666	60.68%	3,814
Seven	3,934	2,197	55.85%	2,076
Eight	1,628	844	51.84%	756
Nine	4,350	2,717	62.46%	2,853
Ten	5,159	2,786	54.00%	2,767
1982	160	98	61.25%	108
Totals	37,152	20,830	56.07%	20,834

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November is Past Pres. Parlay Month

November is Past Presidents Parley month. I hope that every Unit has a Past President's Parley. Wouldn't it be great if Minnesota would have a 100% participation? Many Units have Past Presidents of the District and Department and some even a Past National President. The Past Presidents of all level are here to assist and mentor members, you never know. Your Unit might help someone come along to be one of the future Auxiliary leaders. Along with Unit members the Past Presidents Parley emphasis on women veterans, as our military has changed and we sometimes seem to overlook what their needs are.

Remember, the deadline for the Past President Parley Health Care Scholarship is earlier than the Annual Reports. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me for more information. The Unit Guide is also a great tool for information. The November Unit mailing and Trophies and Awards also contain detailed information on the American Legion Auxiliary Past Presidents Parley.



CHRIS RONNING

Remember to nominate a Unit Member of the year. If chosen, she will be honored at the 2017 National Convention in Reno. Please follow the guidelines listed in the Trophies and Awards document when making your selection.

Past Presidents are ambassadors for the members of the American Legion Auxiliary and are here to share information to make this organization strong and maintain its growth.



NATIONAL WINNER -- Brennan Rasmussen was the winner of the annual Department of Minnesota Poppy Poster Contest. His poster then went on to National where it was judged one of the top 7 posters in the nation.

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- The Golden Isles (Jekyll Island & St. Simons)
- Gospel Dinner Cruise
- Georgia Sea Turtle Center
- Charleston Tea Plantation
- Magnolia Plantation
- Biltmore Estate

\$1,950.00
 Per Person Double Occupancy

Heart of Alaska
 July 14-21, 2017

Tour Includes:

- 4-Seasons Tour Director, Sue Barber
- Round trip Delta flights Minneapolis to Anchorage
- 7 nights accommodations
- 12 Meals
- Denali Park Natural History Tour
- Alaska Railroad between Talkeetna & Denali Park
- Riverboat Discovery Cruise
- Gold Dredge #8
- Prince William Sound Cruise
- Meares Glacier
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Pricing to come!

San Antonio Riverwalk
 February 19-26, 2017

Tour Includes:

- 4-Seasons Tour Manager, Cindy Meany
- 7 nights accommodations with 3 nights in San Antonio along the Riverwalk
- 13 meals: 7 breakfast, 6 dinners
- Deluxe motor coach transportation
- Market Square (San Antonio)
- Riverwalk District
- San Fernando Cathedral
- San Antonio history tour
- Riverwalk boat tour
- Dallas food and history walking tour

\$1,299.00
 Per Person Double Occupancy

Monuments of Washington D.C.
 March 31-April 4, 2017

Tour Includes:

- 4-Seasons Tour Director, Sue Barber
- Round trip Delta Airlines flights Minneapolis to Washington D.C.
- 4 nights accommodations in the Washington D.C. area
- Evening guided Memorial and Monuments tour
- Two full-day guided tours of Washington D.C.
- Admission to George Washington's Mount Vernon Estate and Garden
- WWII Memorial, Capitol Hill, Embassy Row, the Korean War Veterans Memorial, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the Smithsonian, Martin Luther King, Jr. National Memorial, the Lincoln Memorial, and much more!

\$1,399.00
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Alaska Tour & Cruise
 August 4-16, 2017

Tour Includes:

- 4-Seasons Tour Director, Sue Barber
- Round trip Delta flights from Minneapolis
- 7 Night southbound cruise on the ISLAND PRINCESS
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- All sightseeing/entrance fees
- All meals & entertainment aboard the ISLAND PRINCESS
- All transfers to and from the airport, hotel & pier
- Luggage handling for one suitcase

Pricing to come!

Minnesota Twins Spring Training in Florida
 March 2-12 2017

Tour Includes:

- 4-Seasons Tour Manager, Cindy Meany
- Deluxe motor coach transportation
- 10 nights accommodations including 3 nights in Cape Coral, FL and 2 nights in Nashville, TN
- 18 Meals: 10 breakfasts, 1 lunch, 7 dinners
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Panama Canal Cruise
 March 14-30, 2017

Tour Includes:

- 4-Seasons Tour Manager, Larry Alvey
- Roundtrip Delta Air flights Minneapolis to San Francisco and return Ft. Lauderdale to Minneapolis
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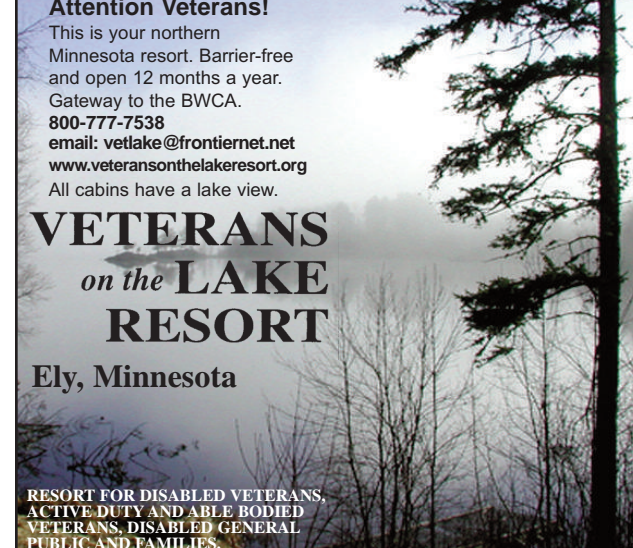


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