

Legionnaire



AMERICAN
LEGION
FAMILY

Volume 102 Number 12

For God and Country

December 2020

DEC hires marketing company

Department hopes reaching young vets spurs membership

BLOOMINGTON — The American Legion Department of Minnesota has hired a marketing firm, Wild Fig Marketing Inc., based in Farmington.

The hire was approved at the Department Executive Committee meeting Nov. 5. The Department's one-year contract with a public relations firm, SnowGlobe PR, expired Oct. 31. SnowGlobe now works on an as-needed basis.

The DEC meeting took place over a video conference as a result of the scheduled Oct. 22 meeting during the Fall Conference at Breezy Point Resort being canceled due to an early season snowstorm and icy roads.

Department Adjutant Mike Maxa complimented SnowGlobe's work but said the Department needs marketing, not public relations.

"This is more about branding of the emblem, getting the word out to younger veterans, and on social media where the younger veterans are," he said.

Department Director of Communications Tim Engstrom said PR is a slow burn that leaves a message in the hands of members of the media to get right. He added that, even if the Department made the TV news every night, young veterans probably aren't watching TV news.

Marketing — done via advertising, social media and email messaging campaigns — allows the Department to reach veterans directly and repeatedly, he said.

"For people who work in sales, it's called the sale before the sale and is

Continued on Page 11



Mike Maxa

VETERANS DAY DISPLAY



With the Veterans Service Building behind him, World War II Navy veteran George Hunkins of St. Paul Post 8 leads the St. Paul Veterans Day Walk on Nov. 11. He started the walk in 2017, and now it is an annual occurrence. Behind him is Ken Gibson of Rosetown Post 542. Behind him is a neighbor of Hunkins who is a member of the Daughters of the American Revolution. In all, three DAR members joined American Legion Family members on the walk, along with a TV photographer for KTSP Channel 5. A segment on the walk aired that evening. See more photos on Page 2.

Money for the movies

Jake Larson joined before the world went to all-out war

By Tim Engstrom

OWATONNA — There is an American Legion member of Wells Post 210 who stormed the beaches of Normandy on D-Day, participated the Battle of Bulge and survived the little-known German attack at Slapton Sands.

His name is Jake Larson. He grew up in Hope down in Steele County but makes his home out in California, in Martinez, the seat of Contra Costa County in the Bay Area. He maintains his membership with Wells because his cousin, the late Edwin L. Larson, was a member and a past commander.

Jake Larson turns 98 this month, and he remembers when the radio dial didn't have hardly any stations. He tells his story clear as a bell.

It was 1938. Larson was 15 and paid his housing by working at a room and board in Hope, so that



This photo of Hope native Jake Larson, a member of Wells Post 210, was taken in Ireland in July 1942.

he could attend high school. One day, Jake and Edwin decided to go to the Saturday Matinee at the Roxy Theater in Owatonna.

It cost 10 cents to see America's favorite cowboy, Gene Autry, and the two boys didn't have a penny, let alone a dime.

Edwin suggested joining the National Guard because it was looking to fill the ranks. Jake pointed out joiners had to be 18.

"Let's go down to the Army and see," Edwin replied. "What are they going to do, kick us out?"

This heavy-set captain, Hugh Soaper, was sitting behind a desk and said, "What can I do for you young men?"

The Larson boys noted he called them men. They wanted to find out about joining.

They talked and, eventually, he said: "I would like you to join the National Guard. What year were you born?"

Jake was born in 1922. He told the captain he was born in 1919. Edwin then said the same thing.

Soaper told them to sign, and they

Continued on Page 8

Minnesota American Legion College graduates its first class

By Tim Engstrom

CAMP RIPLEY — The first class of Minnesota American Legion College graduated in October, and now instructors are planning the next round.

Department Training Committee Chairman Denise Milton said graduates gave positive reviews, and some even desired further instruction. The classes took place Oct. 16-18 at Camp Ripley.

"I thought it went quite well," Milton said.

Instruction included learning about the array of Legion programs. Of course, most members know the high



Minnesota American Legion College instructors were members of the Department Training Committee. From left are Linda Dvorak, Kelley Adelsman, Jennifer Havlick, Chairman Denise Milton, Paul Edwards and Mike Ash.

profile ones, such as Legion Baseball and Boys State, but many were unaware of the National Emergency Fund, Temporary Financial Assistance, Operation Comfort Warriors and the Child Welfare Foundation.

Department Service Officer Jeremy Wolfsteller came to speak on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation. Officers from across the American Legion Family came: American Legion Past National Commander Dan Ludwig, Sons of The American Legion Past National Commander Doug Bible, Minnesota American Legion Riders Director Paul Hassing, American

Continued on Page 7



Commemorate 100 years of your favorite publication!

Donate \$25 or more to The Minnesota Legionnaire, and we will mail you this antique brass 1.75-inch-diameter challenge coin. Donate \$50 or more, we will send you two, \$75 for three, \$100 four and so on. The Legionnaire has been around since 1920, sharing news about The American Legion and the Minnesota veterans community.

Your donation is tax-deductible!

The Minnesota Legionnaire is a nonprofit publication that actually has the business name of Minnesota American Legion Publishing Co. It is a 501(c)4 organization. That means your donations are tax-deductible.

Are you a commander? Maybe get one for each of your officers. These will look great in any coin display.

It benefits vets

The Legionnaire is an outreach function, keeping vets informed on topics from health benefits to ideas for good deeds to war stories of fellow vets. We recognize vets in life with our news and, sadly, in death with "Taps."

The Legionnaire purchased the coins from American Legion Flag & Emblem Sales, so that money, too, goes directly toward American Legion charitable causes that aid vets, such as Operation Comfort Warriors.

It's a win-win donation.

A charitable fundraiser for

The Minnesota

Legionnaire



We are straight with our readers. The reason we are doing a fundraiser for your newspaper is because advertising revenue is down as a result of the pandemic's economic recession.

We could make it without a fundraiser, but doing one now ensures the financial health of our nonprofit publication during this uneasy time.

Please make your donation below:

Name or group: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone (required): _____

Amount of donation: _____

Cut out and mail to:
The Minnesota Legionnaire
20 W. 12th St., Room 300A
St. Paul, MN 55155-2000

And thank you!

VETERANS DAY DISPLAY (continued from Page 1)



A KTSP photographer, left, captures footage of veterans walking down St. Peter Street in St. Paul and crossing West 10th Street on Nov. 11. Many workers waved to and clapped hands for the marchers from their downtown buildings.



The Veterans Day Walk stopped at the front of the iconic Ramsey County Courthouse.



A famous St. Paul landmark store is Candyland, which has served the community since 1932. Peanuts characters Snoopy, Woodstock and Lucy adorn the front entrance to the candy and popcorn store. The employees waved as the veterans walked by.



The Veterans Day Walk participants stroll past the Minnesota Peace Officers Memorial on Nov. 11. The memorial was vandalized this summer, and the state soon repaired it. In the background is the Minnesota State Capitol.

Endorsements

Gibson endorsed for sgt. at arms

Rosetown Memorial Post 542 and the 4th District have endorsed Kenneth Gibson as a candidate for Department Sergeant at Arms for 2021-2022.

He is currently the chair of the Minneapolis Veterans Home for the 4th District. During his 35 years at Rosetown, he has served as a member of the Color Honor Guard and as Color Guard Commander.

Ken is also a member of the Fort Snelling Rifle Squad and serves on

the Board of Directors of the Veterans Campground on Big Marine Lake.

He was named 4th District Blue Cap of the Year in 2019. Ken is also a member of many community organizations and has served as the Commander of the Disabled American Veterans. He served in the Navy during the Cuban Missile Crisis and Vietnam.

He and his wife, Sandra, have two children and two grandchildren.



Kenny Gibson

Adelsman endorsed for Chaplain

The Rev. Kelley Adelsman has been endorsed for Minnesota Department Chaplain by the Minnesota 3rd District Executive Committee and Charles Cowden Post 184, Pine Island.

Adelsman served in the U.S. Army from 1984 to 1989 and the Minnesota Army National Guard from 2006 to 2012.

At the Post level she served as Chaplain 2012-13 and Service Officer 2012-13, 2020-21, and at the District as Vice Commander, 2019-21.

She was recently appointed to the Department's new Minnesota American Legion College subcommittee in 2020 for a five-year term. She is a National American Legion College Graduate of 2019.

As an ordained minister (Master of Divinity, Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary and Graduate School) ecclesiastical endorsement through

Converge Worldwide and six units of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) (Mayo Clinic and St. Cloud Veterans Administration Health Care System) she has been a hospice Chaplain and Bereavement Coordinator in southeast Minnesota and in the Minnesota Army National Guard.

She has served as the Mayo Clinic Veteran Mayo Employee Resource Group Co-Vice Chair where she was actively involved in presenting, writing and developing programs on who serves and what is U.S. Armed Forces.

In 2014, she participated in the Minnesota Suicide Prevention Task Force. She has served as the board chair for the American Foundation Suicide Prevention Southeast

Minnesota Chapter. She has extensive presentation experience such as creating presentations on Spiritual, Ethical Challenges of Suicide at End-of-Life and Healthcare Needs of US Armed Forces Personnel.



Kelley Adelsman

She has co-managed the Hospice We Honor Veterans program in Red Wing and Rochester. Currently she is employed at Mayo Clinic.

Kelley resides in Pine Island with her husband of 25 years, Mike. They enjoy their three grown children and take care of their youngest daughter's two cats while she is attending UMD.

Kelley enjoys advocating for those who have served in the U.S. Armed Forces and spiritual practice development.

Be a beacon in a time of uncertainty

Season's Greetings, Legion Family.

I really do miss seeing all of you. This will definitely be a year that we talk about for a long time. All I can say is try to make the best of it.

There is a lot of confusion and anger going on in the world, but we don't have to be the ones spreading the anger. We should be the ones that people see making the best of a bad situation. We should be the light in the darkness that people are looking for.

When I'm getting down about the current situation the world

Legion Riders

Paul Hassing



is in, I can always look to the Legion Family and see the good things. I see people that are reaching out and saying "How can I help?" I see good people spreading laughter and doing their best to lighten things up.

It's been said that misery loves company, but it's not good company. Please don't be the one who spreads the anger, fear or confusion. We are all hurting

in some way right now. Let us be the beacon the world turns to for guidance. Even the best can be better. Love you all,

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

SPREAD THE CHEER



The Minneapolis Veterans Home sent out this holiday card and asked it be in the Legionnaire for folks who aren't on its mailing list.

Silver Bay struggling with COVID-19

SILVER BAY — A Duluth TV station confirmed on Nov. 20 that five residents of the Silver Bay Veterans Home have died from COVID-19 in the week prior to the report.

The deaths came when the veterans home had an outbreak of 38 cases among residents and staff. Health care regulations prevent officials from saying how many cases are staff and how many are residents.

Simone Hogan, senior director of veterans health care for the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs, told KQDS-TV, more commonly called Fox 21: "All veterans who passed had either family or staff present at that time. They were at their bedside, and no one died alone."

MDVA was shifting staff from other areas to manage the outbreak.

"The facility is approaching critical staffing levels but we're not there at this time. We're monitoring that every day, sometimes every shift," said Hogan.

The Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs has a phone number people can call to get revised COVID numbers daily. That number is 651-757-1599.

On Monday, Nov. 23, the message from MDVA Deputy Commissioner Doug Hughes said there were 42 cases at the Silver Bay Veterans Home.

"As goes the region and community, so goes the facility," he said.

He said there were 12 at the Minneapolis Veterans Home, eight at Luverne, five in Fergus Falls and one in Hastings.

That totals 68 across the system.

In the message, Hughes said he can shift personnel but never wants to leave another facility critically short. He said if the situation in Silver Bay worsens, he could get emergency help from the state, "but we are not there yet."

Silver Bay welcomes new administrator

In October, the MDVA

announced a new administrator for the Silver Bay Veterans Home.

Daren Rife joins MDVA after working for Sioux Falls-based Good Samaritan Society's senior home in Jackson.

"Daren has successfully served for over eight years as the administrator of two Good Samaritan care facilities in Southwest Minnesota," Hughes said.

The previous administrator, Carol Gilbertson, retired in September after leading for 12 years. Craig Smith led in the interim.

Homestyle Builder
Our Approach: Serving You

Initial meeting and quote are free | Experience working with VA SAH Grants

homestylebuilder.com
612-270-4049

The home you want. The house you need.

ACCREDITED BUSINESS | Certified Living in Place Professional | CERTIFIED NARI PROFESSIONAL UDCP

POST-9/11 PROJECT

We invite you to share your personal accounts of 9/11 and the resulting Global War on Terror on our website: **mnmilitarymuseum.org**

Stories will become part of the permanent archive of the museum and inform our plans of a display and broadcast documentary in 2021

We also invite you to join our online community

Announcing a virtual **Post-9/11 Roundtable** via Zoom, throughout 2021

Monday, January 25 at 7:00PM
Always the 4th Monday of the month
Visit our website for full details

MN Military & Veterans Museum • Camp Ripley
15000 Highway 115 • Little Falls, MN 56345
320-616-6050 • mnmilitarymuseum.org

This project has been financed in part with funds provided by the State of Minnesota from the Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund through the Minnesota Historical Society.



Legion will come out of this stronger

Greetings American Legion Family.

The Midwest Region National Vice Commander Meeting was held via Zoom on Wednesday, Nov. 18.

The Midwest Region consists of the following states: North Dakota, South Dakota, Minnesota, Iowa, Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma and Texas. Each state commander gives a brief summary about membership, current status on COVID-19 and plans and expectations moving forward for our American Legion Family.

National Commander Bill Oxford joined us and had the following comments, "Membership is the life blood of our organization. Everyone is a recruiter! We all know someone who is eligible for membership in the American Legion Family, and we should take the time to explain what we can do for them through our many programs. In return they can get involved in a cause greater than themselves. We are all part of the *Membership Team!*"

One state is doing targeted revitalizations, regional membership workshops and promoting their programs through various

Commander's Column

Mark Dvorak



communication outlets. The Sons of the American Legion in one state is recruiting for SAL members throughout the state using various forms of communication and expect to grow by 30 percent this year. As a consequence of their efforts, they have been able to recruit new members for the Legion and Auxiliary.

Training Tuesdays are being held the last Tuesday of each month by National. This training is mainly for the posts. In October, there were over 600 participants! The training begins at 7 p.m. eastern time (6 central) and the link is www.legion.org/training-Tuesdays.

Training is critical for our Posts as we move into the 21st century. Our first Minnesota American Legion College was held Oct. 16, 17 and 18 at Camp Ripley and was a huge success! I was fortunate to be there for most of the instruction and after-action meetings.

A big thank-you to the following for being a part of this

Training Committee and providing the instruction during the three days: Denise Milton, Mike Ash, Paul Edwards, Jennifer Havlick, Kelley Adelman and Linda Dvorak. They all exemplified professionalism, motivation and a sincere desire to teach and talk about our American Legion Family! Please take the time and thank these individuals.

Our Department and National are definitely moving in the right direction on training and I feel within time, we, as a Legion Family will grow and our organization will become even *stronger!* From my family to yours, I hope you have the best Christmas season.

For God and Country, we continue our mission.

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

Prayers and sharing holiday memories

Chaplain's Corner

Betty Jass



One of the greatest gifts that God has given humanity is the beautiful gift of memory. In a sense, memory allows us to relive a moment that was so special to us. I always find myself reminiscing about the past and cherishing the memories of my family and friends.

Since we are currently surrounded by the COVID-19 virus and the restrictions it brings, sharing our good family memories can help us to enjoy this holiday and reduce the stress. There are three things that can help listed below:

1. Treasure the small things in your heart.

There are times when God is doing things and we might not understand it yet. That is why it's important to cherish the little moments on your walk with God. One of the best ways to treasure the small things is by journaling. Write things down daily and pray about them.

In Luke 2, we noticed that Mary treasured and thought about all that occurred and was said before her. She treasured things in her heart even though she didn't fully understand. We should also treasure and cherish the little

things even though we don't fully understand and see the full picture yet.

2. Remember what the Lord has done for you.

Some of my greatest memories are the ones that involve my spiritual background. It can be such a beautiful picture in our minds when we remember how God protects and saved us. This memory is something that you should constantly replay in your mind.

I often think about the brilliant sunrises coming through my trees on a beautiful morning walk with my hound or being able to start my car on a subzero morning and saying, "Thank you, God!" afterward.

During this holiday season we can still give thanks for our families, friends, great food, etc. Remembering what God has done keeps our spiritual fires burning.

3. Remembering others in prayer.

One thing I love about St. Paul is that he always remembered other believers in prayer.

Paul was imitating God, which is exactly what we should be doing. We are called to remember others. We have been given a great privilege to be used by God in prayer. Let's take advantage of it.

Remember that stranger that you talked to. Remember those struggling family members. Remember those friends going through tough situations. Pray that He helps you to remember others and that He brings people to your mind as you pray.

So, even with the COVID-19 restrictions, we can still enjoy the holidays by treasuring the small moments in your heart, remembering what God has done for you and remembering others in prayer.

Happy Holidays, everyone!

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

Mail Call

Opinions expressed in Mail Call are that of the authors and do not reflect the opinion of The Minnesota Legionnaire or The American Legion.

Is this how freedom is lost in America?

I am a life member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars and yearly member of The American Legion.

COVID-19 has played a devastating role in 2020 so far. The governor's initial reaction may have been correct, but all of the mandates and executive orders prolonging his emergency power are hurting Minnesotans and their way of life. One cannot just create an executive order countering an existing law. That is unconstitutional.

Extending your own emergency powers so you do not have to collaborate with the other legislative chambers is not only unconstitutional, it's making yourself a dictator.

We all took an oath to defend this country from all enemies foreign and domestic. Our oath did not end with our service. With every extension and executive order, it is a removal of our freedom. Freedoms we have to hold dear or risk losing them.

The bar/restaurant industry has already lost over 15,000 businesses to these mandates. Our American Legions and VFW Posts homes are in that same group. If we do not stand up to this, we are failing our comrades and fellow Minnesotans. The American Legions' and VFWs' primary benefactors from all proceeds are veterans and children's causes.

If we do not lead in this stand against a governmental overreach, then we have become sheep and deserve our fate. By standing up to the governor, TAL and VFW will show Minnesotans and the rest of the country that we are not afraid and many others will follow.

"The tree of Liberty must be

refreshed, from time to time, with the blood of Patriots and Tyrants." — Thomas Jefferson

James B. West
MSG, US Army,
Infantry (ret)
Monticello Post 260

100 Miles for Hope inspires suburban walker

I finished 100 Miles for Hope, and I posted it on the Legion website Legiontown.org.

I walked 100 miles for the Veteran Resilience Project because I was drafted in 1970 and served as a medic during the Vietnam War. I was helped enormously, years ago, using my own insurance to access the eye movement desensitization and reprocess (EMDR) therapy VRP makes available at no cost to veterans, whether or not they are VA-eligible.

My experience was similar to that of thousands of trauma survivors worldwide for over 30 years. For most trauma, there is nothing better.

I walked 100 miles for the Veteran Resilience Project because "once a medic, always a medic," and VRP can help. I came home at a time that over 50,000 American soldiers did not. Far too many are not returning today, or return not at all who they were when they left.

We can almost instantly raise massive sums of money to fund stadiums and sports teams, send young men and women into harm's way or to elect the candidates of our choice. Then we continue, as a nation, to mumble weakly, "Well, we're working on it" when too many veterans take their own lives, or simply remain unable to play sports in

the neighborhood, care for their family, or function adequately at a job.

Please support the Veteran Resilience Project.

Larry Johnson
veteran, medic,
VRP volunteer
Golden Valley Post 523

Legion members can resolve election issues

I would like for Department, District and Post commanders to reach out to respective voting precincts and offer to be poll watchers or serve in some capacity to authenticate a vote.

My personal fear is that we will be somewhat of a divided nation no matter what the result of the contested election is. People will believe what they want to believe, even if everything is accounted for. I believe the American Legion can rise to this occasion and help build bridges in these times of uncertainty.

Uncertainty of the media, political parties, ideologies, ad infinitum.

Here are some bullet points that I can identify:

- Legion Members:
 - Are respected by their communities, I also believe that could fulfill a greater purpose.
 - Have all taken a secondary oath to the constitution when they signed up for their respective service
 - Have many different political philosophies giving way to their independent views.
 - Will have a greater sense as a group (compared to other) to ensure a fair election.
 - Provide purpose and true community involvement, like

How to ...

Send letters to the editor for Mail Call to tengstrom@mnlegion.org. It's that easy.

much of our service members wish to do.

Justin Lutterman
Le Center Post 108

Everyone is going to die eventually

How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time.

How do you lose your freedoms? One bad compromise at a time, or a tyrannical politician's throwing out unconstitutional edicts on a whim, and unelected bureaucrats writing unconstitutional or nonsensical regulations, such as telling schoolchildren which side of the street they have to be on when walking to or from school!

Another example is unconstitutional red flag laws where the alleged offender is stripped of Second Amendment rights at an ex parte hearing where the alleged offender is not even given a chance to be present with representation!

The first they know of it is when the sheriff shows up at your door wanting all of their guns!

Governors are writing unconstitutional edicts that are infringing on First Amendment rights such as the freedom to worship and making it illegal to even open and read aloud from the Bible, but marijuana shops, abortion clinics, liquor stores, strip clubs are allowed to remain open.

We are now seeing where

tyrannical politicians are doing everything in their power to put a stop to Thanksgiving and you will be seeing them pushing the pedal to the metal in attempt to destroy Christmas!

One of communism's goals is the destruction of religion! The same goes for wearing a mask, aka "face diaper." Do you wear one for a reason? Or are you just a lemming because some radical politician or hack bureaucrat said so?

This whole virus is based on

fear and fear alone, fear that we'll get sick and die, fear that you'll give it to Granny and Granny will die! Well, I have a message for you: We all are going to die! FDR said it best: The only thing we have to fear is fear itself!

It's time to stand up and keep your oath and start calling out these tyrannical people out, call, write, do what you can!

Earl Pederson
Renville Post 180

The Minnesota

Legionnaire

FOR GOD AND COUNTRY

Official publication of
The American Legion
Department of Minnesota

About: The Minnesota Legionnaire (USPS 013679) (ISSN 01644270) is published Monthly by The American Legion, Department of Minnesota, Room 300 A, 20 W 12th St., St Paul, MN 55155-2000.

Periodicals postage paid at St Paul, Minnesota, and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to The Minnesota Legionnaire, 20 W. 12th St., St. Paul, MN 55155-2000.

First published in 1920 as the Hennepin County Legionnaire, the Minnesota Legionnaire is now in its 100th year of publication. The Legionnaire is a member of the National American Legion Press Association.

To advertise: 651-424-4612 or use the email below
Subscription: \$20 for non-members for one year or \$35 for two years. Members receive the Legionnaire as part of their dues.

Phone: 651-291-1800, 866-259-9163

Fax: 651-291-1057

Email: tengstrom@mnlegion.org

Web: mnlegion.org

Editor: Director of Communications Tim Engstrom

Editor Emeritus: Al Zdon

Board of Publication: President Mark Dvorak, New Prague; Vice President Dennis Henkemeyer, Blue Earth; Secretary Mike Maxa, Montgomery; Treasurer Bill Goede, Plainview; Don Amundson, Blue Earth; Darrel Redepenning, Fridley; Joe Bayer, Minneapolis; Carroll Partridge, Oakdale; Paul Edwards, Brainerd; Dennis Henkemeyer, Bagley; Patti Coleman, Circle Pines; Mary Kuperus, New London

Taps



Adams, Everett J., 77, Army Reserve veteran of the Vietnam War, died Aug. 13, 2020. He was a member of Janesville Post 281.

Anderson, James J. "Jim," 94, Army veteran of World War II, died Nov. 6, 2020. He was a 64-year member of Sauk Rapids Post 254.

Bahn, Marvin, 86, Air Force veteran of the Korean War, died Nov. 12, 2020. He served as a tail gunner on the B-36 bomber. He was a police officer in his civilian life and served 15 years as Marshall police chief. He was a 66-year member of Marshall Post 113.

Bailey, R.A. Gordon "Gordy," 103 1/2, Army veteran of World War II, died Oct. 27, 2020. He served in a tank destroyer battalion. He was the eldest male member of the Red Lake Band of Ojibwe at the time of his death. He was a 62-year member of Keewatin Post 452.

Bisek, Eugene E. "Gene," 85, Air Force veteran of the Korean War. He was stationed in Saudi Arabia. He was a 44-year member of New Prague Post 45.

Bisson, Keith, 87, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Oct. 17, 2020. He was a member of East Grand Forks Post 157.

Blenker, Andrew A., 95, Army veteran of World War II, died Oct. 27, 2020. He served as an automotive mechanic and was part of the occupation of Japan. He was a 74-year member of Albany Post 482.

Buraas, Conrad O., 74, Army veteran of the Vietnam War, died Nov. 10, 2020. He served as a typist in Germany. He was a member of East Grand Forks Post 157.

Carlson, Adolph E., 97, Army veteran of World War II, died Sept. 1, 2020. He was part of the liberation of Korea during the Occupation of Japan. He was a member of Warba Post 432.

Chaika, Gary, 84, Air Force veteran of Korean, Vietnam and Cold wars, died Oct. 17, 2020. He was a 43-year member of Sauk Rapids Post 254.

Christensen, Andrew L. "Andy," 89, Air Force veteran of the Korean War, died Oct. 3, 2020. He was a member of Hackensack Post 202.

Coons, Robert G., 75, Army veteran of the Vietnam War, died Aug. 30, 2020. He served in Germany as a medic, was named Soldier of the Year for his battalion and earned the Field Medical Badge. He was a member of Lanesboro Post 40.

Czech, Clarence J., 85, Army veteran of the Cold War, died Oct. 30, 2020. He served in South Korea. He was a member of Milaca Post 178.

Dahl, Edward I., 95, Army Air Forces veteran of World War II, died Nov. 2, 2020. He was stationed in India during the war. He was a member of Bagley Post 16.

Dalen, Leonard, 95, Navy veteran of World War II, died Oct. 3, 2020. He served in the Philippines. He was a 69-year member of St. James Post 33.

Deones, Nicholas B., 83, Army Reserve veteran of the Vietnam War, died Sept. 23, 2020. He is a member of Winona Post 9.

DeVos, John "Jake," 87, Army veteran of the Korean War, Nov. 12, 2020. He was a past commander and member of Marshall Post 113.

Duran, Arthur, 85, Marine veteran of the Korean War, died Oct. 17, 2020. He was a member of the Honor Guard and Minnesota Rifle Squad and past commander of Monticello Post 260.

Edwards, James "Jim," 77, Army veteran of the Vietnam War, died Nov. 12, 2020. He served in Korea. He was a member of Marshall Post 113.

Edwards, Michael H., 68, Air Force veteran of the Vietnam War, died Nov. 1, 2020. He served as a field mechanic for B-52s. He was a member of Albert Lea Post 56.

Evancevich, Charles J. "Tuna," 61, Air Force veteran of Lebanon/Grenada, died Oct. 9, 2020. He graduated from and played hockey for the Air Force Academy. He was a member of Babbitt Post 535.

Falldin, John, 74, Army veteran of World War II, died Oct. 24, 2020. His mother, Anna, had nine sons in the military during World War II, believed to be the most at the same time. He was a 74-year member of Falldin Post 555 going back to when it was chartered in 1946.

Filter, Lawrence A. Sr., 92, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Oct. 24, 2020. He was a member of Marshall Post 113.

Foldoe, Kenneth J., Army veteran of World War II, died Nov. 8, 2020. He was awarded a Silver Star, Bronze Star and Purple Heart with the 24th Infantry Division in the Pacific Theater. He was a 40-year member of Bagley Post 16.

Freie, Kenneth H., 92, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Nov. 4, 2020. He was a 35-year member of Long Prairie Post 12.

Groth, Neal R., 74, Army veteran of the Vietnam War, died May 13, 2020. He was a member of Lonsdale Post 586.

Gulbrandson, Robert S., 94, Navy veteran of World War II, died Nov. 1, 2020. He served as a radioman, died Oct. 22, 2020. He was a 30-year member of Albert Lea Post 56.

Gwynn, Curtis, 93, Navy veteran of World War II, died Oct. 26, 2020. His ship was patrolling the Sea of Japan

Obituaries

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

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

during the days Hiroshima and Nagasaki were bombed. He was a 64-year member of Park Rapids Post 212.

Haskamp, James B. "Jim," 76, Army National Guard veteran of the Cold War, died Sept. 3, 2020. He was a 40-year member of Lake Henry Post 612.

Henkemeyer, John "Jack," 98, Navy veteran of World War II, died Oct. 28, 2020. He served in the South Pacific as an aviation machinist. He was a 48-year member of Sauk Rapids Post 254.

Herrick, Robert P., 81, Air Force veteran of the Cold War, died Oct. 29, 2020. He was stationed in Alaska. He was a member of Winona Post 9.

Herzberg, Arthur A., 96, Navy veteran of World War II, died Nov. 1, 2020. He served aboard the USS Boston in the South Pacific. He was a 31-year member of Paynesville Post 271.

Herzberg, Arthur, 96, Navy veteran of World War II, died Nov. 1, 2020. He served aboard the USS Boston in the Pacific. He was the last of nine brothers who served in the military, seven in WWII. He was a 31-year member of Paynesville Post 271.

Hoglund, Ruben W., 98, Army veteran of World War II, died Aug. 13, 2020. He served in the Philippines. He was a 68-year member of Spicer Post 545.

Horejsi, David A., 79, Army veteran of the Vietnam War, died Sept. 28, 2020. He served in Germany as an armor crewman. He was a past commander, Honor Guard member and 54-year member of Silver Lake Post 141.

Houle, Howard E., 98, Navy veteran of World War II and Korean War, died Oct. 13, 2020. He served as a machinist's mate in the Asiatic Pacific. He was a 57-year member of Coon Rapids Post 334.

Hrdlicka, Chester D., Army veteran of the Korean War, died Nov. 5, 2020. He was wounded three times during two tours. He was a former mayor of Elysian. He was a past 3rd District commander and past Department vice commander. He was a 67-year member of Elysian Post 311.

Iverson, Donald H., 86, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Nov. 7, 2020. He served as a combat engineer. He was the first Korean era commander and 66-year member of East Grand Forks Post 157.

Johnson, Nolan, 84, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Oct. 18, 2020. He began his enlistment a week before the end of the war era. He was a 46-year member of Austin Post 91.

Johnson, Sherman, 90, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Oct. 16, 2020. He was a 62-year member of Thief River Falls Post 117.

Joosten, Alan L., 73, Army veteran of the Vietnam War, died Oct. 1, 2020. He spent 21 years in the National Guard. He was a state champion arm wrestler in 1974 and 1976. He was a member of St. Peter Post 37.

Kelly, Gerald I. "Jerry," Army veteran of the Korean War, died Feb. 16, 2020. He was stationed in Germany and Austria. He was a 42-year member of Coon Rapids Post 334.

Kiecker, Emery, 86, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Oct 3, 2020. He served in Japan as the war was ending. He was a 62-year member of Fairfax Post 205.

Klassen, Robert, 87, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Oct. 23, 2020. He was a member of Long Prairie Post 12.

Klein, David G., 95, Navy veteran of World War II, died Nov. 9, 2020. He was a member of Waite Park Post 428.

Kochmann, Bruce A., 67, Air Force veteran of the Vietnam War, died Oct. 30, 2020. He was a 34-year member of Park Rapids Post 212.

Kraft, Keith L., 93, Marine veteran of World War II, died Nov. 6, 2020. He was the last lay judge to come to the bench. He served 36 years in the National Guard and 34 years as a judge. As a soldier, he walked alone into a packing plant strike in Waterloo, Iowa, and convinced a striker to surrender a stolen National Guard firearm. He was a member of Park Rapids Post 212.

Kuklinski, George J., 86, Navy veteran of the Korean War, died Oct. 29, 2020. He served aboard the USS Roanoke. He was a member of Winona Post 9.

Lavigne, Clarence E. "John," 97, Navy veteran of World War II and Korean War, died Oct. 16, 2020. He was a member of Rush City Post 93.

Lind, Robert F., 88, Navy veteran of the Korean War, died Sept. 8, 2020. He served aboard the destroyer USS Willard Keith. He was a member of Robbinsdale Crystal Post 251.

Lundberg, Orin C., 90, Air Force veteran of the Korean War, died Oct. 21. He was stationed at Chanute Air Base, Illinois, where he completed technical training in aircraft mechanics. He was a 51-year member of Alexandria Post 87.

Lundquist, Howard N., 89, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Oct. 20, 2020. He earned two Bronze Stars during 10 months in Korea. He was a member of Janesville Post 281.

Mammen, Leland J., 70, Army Reserve veteran of the Vietnam War, died Oct. 31, 2020. He was a member of Redwood Falls Post 38.

Mathiowetz, Lowell R., 72, Army National Guard veteran of the Vietnam War, died Aug. 30, 2020. He was a member of New Ulm Post 132.

Melby, Gerald "Jerry," 76, Army Reserve veteran of the Vietnam War, died Oct. 31, 2020. He was a 32-year member of Lowry Post 253.

Meyer, Dennis D., 74, Army veteran of the Vietnam War, died Nov. 13, 2020. He was a member of Bagley Post 16.

Miklos, Donald L., 85, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Oct. 4, 2020. He served at Fort Carson, Colorado. He was a past chaplain and a member of Rice Post 473.

Moore, Wendell P., 93, Navy veteran of World War II, died Sept. 23, 2020. He served in the Pacific aboard the USS Jefferson County (LST 845). He was a 61-year member of Winona Post 9.

Nelson, Howard, 87, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Oct. 13, 2020. He was a member of Thief River Falls Post 117.

Nelson, Russell R., 89, Navy veteran of the Korean War, died Nov. 3, 2020. He was a 65-year member of Hutchinson Post 96.

Neve, Raymond K., 98, Army Air Corps veteran of World War II, died Oct. 28, 2020. He was a 52-year member of Austin Post 91.

Ohmann, John A. "Jackie," 96, Navy veteran of World War II, died Oct. 15, 2020. He served in the South Pacific aboard the USS Jenkins. He was a 54-year member of Lake Henry Post 612.

Parker, Marlin, 81, Air Force veteran of the Cold War, died Nov. 12, 2020. He served overseas in Turkey and Europe. He was a member of Little Falls Post 46.

Ramstad, James M., 74, Army Reserve veteran of the Vietnam War, died Nov. 5, 2020. He represented the 3rd Congressional District of Minnesota for nine terms. He served in the Minnesota Senate for 10 years prior to being elected to Congress. He spoke frequently at Minnesota Boys State. As a youth, he was governor of North Dakota Boys State and participated in Boys Nation. He was a 42-year member of Wayzata Post 118.

Remus, Allan J., 90, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Sept. 16, 2020. He was a 68-year member of Princeton Post 216.

Rethlake, Bruce, 84, Army National Guard veteran of the Korean War, died Oct. 20, 2020. He was a member of Litchfield Post 104.

Roesch, Richard, 93, Navy veteran of World War II, died Nov. 2, 2020. He was stationed in the Philippines. He was a member of New Ulm Post 132.

Rolfe, Robert L. "Bob," 87, Navy veteran of the Korean War, died Oct. 27, 2020. He served aboard the USS Bon Homme Richard CV31. He was a 46-year member of Coon Rapids Post 334.

Ronning, Stanley, Navy veteran of World War II, died Nov. 13, 2020. He was a member of Bagley Post 16.

Sauerer, Michael C., 73, Army veteran of the Vietnam War, died Nov. 4, 2020. He served in Germany. He was a member of the Honor Guard and Rifle Squad and 44-year member of Albany Post 482.

Schneider, Erwin H., 92, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Oct. 31, 2020. He was a member of Long Prairie Post 12.

Schuldt, Wilbert H., 93, Navy veteran of World War II, died Oct. 27, 2020. He served 18 months in the South Pacific and had many experiences in Guam. He was a 32-year member of Caledonia Post 191.

Seifert, Myron N., 91, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Oct. 21, 2020. He served in the 502nd Heavy Artillery in Alaska. He was a 55-year member of Hutchinson Post 96.

Skoglund, Vernon B., 90, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Oct. 15, 2020. He served in the 223rd Infantry Division doing radio and telephone and was sent to the Punch Bowl in April 1953. He was at Heartbreak Ridge when the truce between North and South Korea was signed July 1953. He was a 58-year member of Middle River Post 444.

Smith, Ronald J. "Roper," 76, Army veteran of the Vietnam War, died Oct. 28, 2020. He was a 37-year member of Winona Post 9.

Soine, James M., 75, Army veteran of the Vietnam War, died Oct. 21, 2020. He was a member of Hackensack Post 202.

Stocker, Ralph H., 96, Navy veteran of World War II, died Nov. 4, 2020. He was a 48-year member of East Grand Forks Post 157.

Stoltman, John D. "Jack," Army veteran of the Korean War, died Oct. 31, 2020. Known for his distinctive voice, he served as chaplain for the Honor Guard for 25 years and was a 64-year member of East Grand Forks Post 157.

Stromberg, Vernon E., 96, Army veteran of World War II, died Oct. 17, 2020. He served in the 839th AAA Weapons Battalion in Battery D. He was a member of Mora Post 201.

Sullivan, Robert E., 96, Army veteran of World War II, died July 24, 2020. He served in the Signal Corps with the "Sight Seeing 6th Infantry" in the Pacific Theater and

VA expanding caregiver benefits to pre-9/11 veterans, as of Oct. 1

Have you ever received that daunting letter in the mail from the VA that states they are proposing to reduce your disability rating?

What a slap in the face, right? After many years of receiving VA compensation it has become a critical part of your monthly budget, and now it is being threatened to be taken away.

The VA, as a federal agency, is held accountable by the Office of Management and Budget, which oversees performance of federal agencies and has an obligation to ensure U.S taxpayer's dollars are being spent responsibly. OMB's focuses on critical areas like, budget development and execution, financial management and human capital.

While the Veterans Administration has one of the largest budgets within the federal government, requesting \$243 billion in FY21, OMB focuses heavily on the agency spending.

VA estimates that there are around 5.7 million veterans and survivors receiving disability compensation, with a payout per year around \$97 billion. In FY19 the VA paid out approximately \$1.3 billion to Minnesota veterans and survivors alone.

When it comes to VA ensuring they're not paying out disability pay when there's no longer an existing condition or a correct percentage, the issue veterans and stakeholders like The American Legion have is that a fair amount of the time the veteran's condition has remained the same or in some instances the condition has

VA & Rehabilitation

Jeremy Wolfsteller



gotten worse. So, it makes you wonder: Are there VA employees across the country assigned with this reduction mission? Do they randomly pick and choose certain claim files reviewing for a few minutes and then sending these letters out when they see one medical note that is positive?

Regardless of how or why VA is sending these proposed reduction letters out, I want to share with you the options you have in case this happens to you.

First, there are some rating protections that can help you. If your rating has been in effect for five years or more, it is considered "stabilized."

In short, VA cannot reduce based on one exam finding when the health records indicate otherwise.

At 10 years, a veteran rated condition cannot be severed but can be reduced.

Next is when the veteran has 20 years of a continuous rating. Example is a veteran has a 50 percent rating for a back condition for 20 years, the VA cannot reduce below that rating. The only exception would be if there was fraud.

Once VA issues the proposed reduction to your disability the veteran has 60 days to submit evidence to show the disability has not gotten better and 30 days to request an informal hearing.

This is especially important,

by requesting a hearing that can take VA months to conduct, it can buy the veteran more time to gather medical evidence necessary to use against the proposed reduction during the hearing. If a veteran fails to submit evidence or request a hearing within those timeframes, VA will issue the final decision and it will take effect another 60 days from the final decision.

Some other key rules the VA has to apply when trying to reduce a rating that may assist veterans is that a reduction cannot be based only on whether the condition has improved but the ability to function under ordinary conditions of life and work has improved.

Also, VA must base the reduction on a full review of the veteran's medical history, not just one compensation and pension exam.

As always, never go into this alone. There are County Veteran Service Officers in all 87 MN counties ready to assist, along with The American Legion Claims Office if you choose us as your VA Power of Attorney Representative.

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

Everything you wanted to know about 'Taps' but were afraid to ask

Are you new at sending in the "Taps" obituaries? Want some insight into how everything works? Well, today's your lucky day. Cut this out. Post it on your bulletin board.

"Taps" is named for the mournful bugle call played at U.S. military funerals and memorials and as a lights-out signal. It is a fitting name for the area in The Minnesota Legionnaire where we list American Legion members who transfer to Post Everlasting.

I got rid of the deadline of having them sent in within two months. I am happy to recognize the service of any Legion member/veteran in this space, whether timely or late. Plus, it's a good thing to not have the deadline because this coronavirus stuff has made arrangements harder for families and everyone else, what with many funerals being postponed for months.

It typically is the job of the chaplain, membership director or adjutant to send "Taps" to the Legionnaire, but in some places there are enthusiastic members who like to handle the task year-in and year-out. Thank you!

Yes, Posts send in deceased members to membership, but "Taps" is done separately as it calls for additional info. If you sent in deceased members to Misty Padilla, it doesn't mean the names will appear in "Taps." Send "Taps" to me, either via email or postal mail:

tengstrom@mnlegion.org or
The Minnesota Legionnaire
20 W. 20th St. Room 300A
St. Paul, MN 55155

Each entry has the military branch and then war era. War eras can be a tricky matter for vets.

For the first few months, I attempted to delineate whether the late veteran had served in the war zone or during the war. I would say, for example, "Vietnam era" or "Vietnam War."

That became difficult to determine, and I switched to saying "Vietnam War" no matter what as long as they served at the time.

The American Legion is a wartime veteran service organization. Whether you narrowly survived a year in Vietnam or were a pencil pusher at Fort

All American

Tim Engstrom



Benjamin Harrison, you contributed to the war effort. A veteran is a veteran.

This is also the way Past Editor Al Zdon did it and the way the Legion's membership database does it.

Here are the official U.S. war eras. This is handy for noting what to put in the obit:

World War I

April 6, 1917-Nov. 11, 1918

World War II

Dec. 7, 1941-Dec. 31, 1946

Korean War

June 25, 1950-Jan. 31, 1955

Vietnam War

Feb. 28, 1961-May 7, 1975

Lebanon-Grenada

Aug. 24, 1982-July 31, 1984

Panama

Dec. 20, 1989-Jan. 31, 1990

Persian Gulf War:

Yes, the American government never determined an end to hostilities. This war era continues to this day, under the VA rules. But, in reality, it would look inappropriate in an obit for a veteran who served in, say, 2005 to say he or she was a Persian Gulf War veteran. Besides, what about the Iraq, Afghanistan, the Balkans, Somalia, Libya and Syria?

On top of all this, the LEGION Act, passed in July 2019, recognized that America has had ongoing hostilities going back to Dec. 7, 1941. This opened up eligibility in the organization to pretty much all veterans.

So what do you put in the "Taps" entry? Well, believe it or not, the start and end dates for hostilities still exist, even if they aren't used by the government:

Persian Gulf War

Aug. 2, 1990-April 11, 1991

Cold War

Jan. 1, 1947-Dec. 26, 1991

The following war eras overlap. Use what seems most appropriate:

Bosnian War

July, 10, 1992-Dec. 14, 1995

Somali Civil War

Dec. 9, 1992-March 3, 1994

Global War on Terrorism

Sept. 11, 2001-present

War in Afghanistan

Oct. 7, 2001-present

Iraq War

March 20, 2003-Dec. 15, 2011

War with ISIL (in Iraq, Syria and Libya)

June 15, 2014-present

Nothing is cut-and-dry. Just use your best judgment.

Phew! Now on to the rest.

Date of death is important to include. If you forget, no worries. I will hunt down the newspaper obituary online.

OK, next is a good spot to mention a tidbit about their service. What job did they have? What ship or unit did they serve on or with? Where did they serve? No one really cares about rank, with one exception: Commanding a major something is notable. Top dog of the Minnesota National Guard? Yeah, mention that. Commanded a nuclear submarine? Yes, definitely.

We will list personal decorations that are above commendation medals.

We like to mention their involvement with The American Legion. Were they a past commander or any other officer at any level? Maybe they were active as a baseball coach or in the honor guard. Maybe they managed the gambling or the bar or the parade entry. Tell us.

Finally, if they have been a Legionnaire for 30 or more years, I will list it. I figure 30 is the "noteworthy" mark.

Even if you transfer Posts, that doesn't mean you start over in terms of membership. We don't keep track of how long you are a member of a particular Post. I am a 15-year member of Bloomington Post 550, but I spent most of my Legion years with Albert Lea Post 56.

The Post that gets listed in "Taps," though, is the one the member belonged to at the time of death.

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

Sioux Nation Post charts a Riders chapter

ROSEBUD, South Dakota — Located on the Rosebud Indian Reservation in South Dakota, Chauncey Eagle Horn Post 125 was chartered in December 1919 and is one of the oldest Native American Legion Posts. Its namesake was assigned to the 42nd Infantry Division, nicknamed the "Rainbow" Division, and was killed in action on July 29, 1918, in the Battle of Chateau Thierry in France. He was the first man to be killed in WWI combat from any Great Sioux Nation tribe.

Nearly 98 years later, American Legion Riders Chapter 125 was chartered with a primary mission of providing proper final respects to veterans in the area who passed away.

The chapter regularly takes part in funeral

escorts and flag lines, while also taking part in parades, community events and ceremonies.

The chapter was formed shortly after some veterans living in the area met up with American Legion Riders from Hot Springs who were providing an escort for a Korean War prisoner of war whose remains were returned to his sister in Rosebud.

"(The Hot Springs Riders) told us that we should start something around here," said Carole Gregg, a U.S. Army veteran who doubles as Post 125 commander and Chapter 125 director. "That's when six of us got together, joined the Legion and started (Chapter 125). (It was) making sure our veterans are recognized, especially when it's their funeral and they're getting escorted."



The American Legion Department of Minnesota 2021 District Membership Report as of Nov 20, 2020

District	Commander	New 2021	PUFL 2021	Online Ren 2021	Trad Ren 2021	Paid 2021	HQ Trans 2021	Total Mbr 2021	Goal 2021	%Goal	HQ Trans 2020 (As of)	Total Mbr 2020 (As of)
01	DALE P WELLIK	46	859	630	4,564	6,099	10	6,109	8,009	76.28	11	6,309
02	BRADLEY PAGEL	29	649	402	3,566	4,646	11	4,657	6,189	75.25	3	4,965
03	LINDA DVORAK	89	1,557	1,334	5,742	8,722	26	8,748	10,938	79.98	60	8,764
04	JOSEPH M JANSEN	20	287	246	1,070	1,623	4	1,627	2,091	77.81	22	1,691
05	WADE A LARSON	10	305	302	773	1,390	0	1,390	2,164	64.23	3	1,627
06	PAUL D EDWARDS	82	1,110	881	6,039	8,112	27	8,139	10,598	76.80	14	8,579
07	DEAN KNUTSON	25	702	316	3,379	4,422	22	4,444	5,646	78.71	38	4,491
08	GERRIANNE KOSKINEN	14	319	309	2,103	2,745	4	2,749	3,591	76.55	5	2,868
09	STEVEN G SUNDSTROM	35	552	475	3,451	4,513	39	4,552	5,953	76.47	12	4,649
10	THOMAS H ALLEN	76	911	1,089	4,649	6,725	16	6,741	8,780	76.78	10	6,905
99		8	178	350	1,196	1,732	0	1,732	2,997	57.79	0	1,446
Total:		434	7,429	6,334	36,532	50,729	159	50,888	66,956	76.00	178	52,294

What's happening?

Pearl Harbor Rally cancelled

The Pearl Harbor Membership Rally scheduled for Dec. 5 at North St. Paul Post 39 has been cancelled.

The event had been limited to 150 to meet pandemic rules.

However, the decision to cancel came Nov. 13 in light of restrictions on gatherings set by Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz. He revised his restrictions on Nov. 18 to curtail indoor and outdoor gatherings altogether.

Organizers of the rally have contacted people who paid in advance.

V4V approves round of grants

Minnesota Veterans 4 Veterans Trust Fund approved a grant of \$10,000 to go toward the Minneapolis VA Health Care System Gift Card Program.

Minnesota V4V Board member Don Pankake, representing the Minnesota American Legion, said the funds will help many hospitalized veterans and their families during

the holidays.

"As COVID-19 cases spike, more veterans are being hospitalized and losing their jobs because of government shut-down," he said. "The American Legion DSO in collaboration with Minneapolis VAVS chief identified a need for more donations toward their needs list."

Jeremy Wolfsteller is the Department service officer for the Minnesota American Legion, and Ron DeVoll is the chief of voluntary services for the Minneapolis VA.

The V4V Trust Fund Board also gave the green light to \$20,000 — \$5,000 for four Minnesota auxiliaries: American Legion Auxiliary, Disabled American Veterans Auxiliary, Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary and Military Order of the Purple Heart Auxiliary.

"Their mission helps ensure our veterans and families are being cared for," Pankake said.

He added the V4V Board also OK'd \$10,000 for the Armed Forces Service Center at Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport.

"The grant will help provide a welcoming atmosphere for our currently serving armed forces during their travels," he said.

Taps

Continued from Page 5

earned a Bronze Star. He was a member of Rochester Post 92.

Swanson, Wayne, 86, Navy veteran of the Korean War, died Nov. 1, 2020. He was stationed at Pearl Harbor and served on destroyers and escorts in the West Pacific. He served aboard USS McGinty during Operation Redwing in 1956 and witnessed the fallout of 17 atomic bomb tests. He was a 47-year member of Austin Post 91.

Swigart, Russell M., 91, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Nov. 8, 2020. He saw action in the war. He was a member of Redwood Falls Post 38.

Tourand, Jerome J. "Jerry," 79, Army veteran of the Vietnam War, died Nov. 3, 2020. He was a 42-year member of Waite Park Post 428.

Trippler, Dorman O., Marine veteran of Korea and World War II, died Oct. 7, 2020. He served in China and Korea, earning two battle stars. He was a 74-year member of Lindstrom Post 83.

Van Dorsten, Harold L., 95, Army veteran of World War II, died Oct. 27, 2020. He was a member of St. Peter Post 37.

Vollrath, Roy F., 91, Navy veteran of the Korean War, died Oct. 9, 2020. He served in the Caribbean Sea. He was a 67-year member, who first joined Blue Earth Post 89 before later joining Hopkins Post 320.

Waller, Stephen L., 81, Army veteran of the Vietnam War, died Oct. 1, 2020. He was stationed at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. He was a 47-year member of Alexandria Post 87.

Watson, John C., 85, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Oct. 22, 2020. He was a 42-year member of Park Rapids Post 212.

Werkman, Dianne L., no age available, Army National Guard veteran of Vietnam War and Lebanon/Grenada, died Oct. 25, 2020. She was a member of Little Falls Post 46.

Wilfahrt, Leo, 94, Army Air Corps veteran of World War II, died Oct. 31, 2020. He served as a cryptography technician at Lowery Field in Colorado. He was a member of New Ulm Post 132.

Witte, Richard J. "Rick" II, 64, Army veteran of the Vietnam War, died Oct. 22, 2020. He worked for the St. Cloud VA Medical Center in dietetics. He was a 42-year member of Little Falls Post 46.

Ziegelman, Ralph F.T., 93, Army veteran of World War II, died Oct. 14, 2020. He was a 64-year member of Alexandria Post 87.

Zwiener, William A., Army veteran of World War II, died Nov. 9, 2020. He was stationed in occupied Japan for a year. He served 65 years as a counselor for Minnesota Boys State. He was a 44-year member of St. Cloud Post 76.



The first graduates of Minnesota American Legion College pose for a class photo on Oct. 18 at Camp Ripley. Front row from left are William Gordon of St. Michael Post 567, Jamie Woods of Minneapolis Post 291, Joe Tappainer of Apple Valley Post 1776. Second row from left are Leslie Krufft of Park Rapids Post 212, Karen O'Bar of Bertha Post 336, Bruce Braun of Grand Rapids Post 60, David Manson of Spicer Post 545, Pam Krill of Fairmont Post 36, Mary Hanson of Austin Spam Post 570, Dale Wellik of Kasson Post 333, Garylee Davenport of Spicer Post 545 and Gary H. Olson of Moorhead Post 21. Back row from left are James Olson of Mankato Post 11, Donald Claveau Jr. of Duluth Post 28, Randy Olson of Winnebago Post 82, Ken Gibson Jr. of Rosetown Post 542, David Dahl of St. Paul Post 8, Lane Stunkel of St. Paul Arcade-Phalen Post 577, Wade Larson of Minneapolis Gopher Post 440 and Carla Tappainer of Apple Valley Post 1776.

Minnesota Legion College is leadership training

Continued from Page 1

Legion Auxiliary President Mary Hendrickson and, of course, Minnesota American Legion Commander Mark Dvorak.

Instructors were Milton, Department Historian Mike Ash, 3rd District Commander Linda Dvorak, 6th District Commander Paul Edwards, 3rd District Vice Commander Kelley Adelsman, 8th District Membership Director Jennifer Havlick.

"I thanked the commander for choosing the members of the committee as he did because each one has a niche," Milton said.

Havlick has tech skills. Linda Dvorak has organizational skills. Adelsman is inquisitive and has fresh ideas. Edwards was an instructor in the military and has teaching skills. Ash has a vast knowledge of The American Legion.



Milton said many of the instructors and presenters have been to National Legion College, too. She said Minnesota Legion College was formed

for the sake of building knowledge in the next generation of leaders.

"The last few years we've noticed that our Legionnaires

in leadership positions have little or no background in the Legion and what the responsibilities of the job entails," she said.

The Minnesota Legion College originally had been planned for May, but it was pushed back to October because of the pandemic restrictions on gatherings.

Before commencing with the Department Executive Committee, Department Commander Mark Dvorak praised the success of the first Minnesota Legion College and added: "Good work."

Ludwig said: "I really want to commend the folks who worked hard to put a great program together."

Watch The Minnesota Legionnaire and the Department of Minnesota website for how to sign up for the next round of Minnesota American Legion College classes.

Display, Protect and Preserve Your Memorial United States Flag in a Beautifully Handcrafted Solid Oak Flag Case with a Glass Front, Removable Back and Engraved Plate with Name and Branch of Service of Veteran.



"Made by Veterans for Veterans"

Minnesota Veterans Home
1200 E. 18th Street
Hastings, MN 55033

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

Jake Larson: 'That milkshake changed my life'

Continued from Page 1

were in. No ID. No physical. No diploma. No background check. No basic training.

"I was colorblind all my life," Jake said, "until about two years ago. I got my color back when I had cataract surgery. They said cataracts have something to do with color."

The two teenagers went to drill for two hours every Monday night at the Owatonna Armory, learning soldiering from the other soldiers. They were now in the 135th Infantry Regiment, wearing the Red Bull patch of the 34th Infantry Division.

"I took that Red Bull patch along to the 75th anniversary of D-Day," Jake said.

They had joined for the money, and, for the first three months, they didn't get paid. Then they each received a check for \$12.

"We had enough money to step into Steve's Pool Room in Owatonna and order a pitcher of beer for 25 cents. We were in uniform," Jake recalled.

Edwin was big and drank most of the beer. Jake was small.

"We were like Mutt and Jeff," he said.

On Feb. 10, 1941, the federal government called up units of the National Guard from 11 states, including the Red Bulls. The United States had implemented the first peacetime draft in October 1940. When World War II began in September 1939, the U.S. Army only had 189,000 soldiers. It would have 1.46 million by 1941 and 8.27 million by 1945.

The way Jake Larson tells it, the National Guard became the Army and what was called the State Guard performed the role of the National Guard. After the war, the State Guard went away.

His unit was sent to Camp Claiborne in Louisiana, and they had to go through infantry training when they got off the train.

"There were chiggers and ticks. Louisiana is not a place to be crawling around on your stomach," he said.

They trained with old World War I equipment: Brodie helmets, campaign hats, wraparound leggings and Springfield M1903 bolt-action rifles.

"What a reliable old gun, though. If you could aim right, you could always hit," he said. "Most of us were farm boys. We were born with guns in our hands, just trying to shoot food during the Depression."

The '03 rifle is 8 pounds. After training, he began carrying an M1918 Browning Automatic Rifle. A BAR weighs 16 pounds. Larson weighed 120 pounds.

One day, Larson and a buddy, Amos Graham, got a pass to go into Alexandria for a milkshake.

"That milkshake changed my life," Larson said.

After drinking the shake, he told Graham he didn't feel too good and had to vomit. He rode a truck back to camp.

At 5 a.m. the next morning, the corporal of the guard woke him up and informed him he was on KP.

"I'm sick."

"Don't give me that [expletive]," the corporal replied. "Put fatigues on and go to the mess hall."

Larson did but looked like hell. The mess sergeant wondered what had been drinking.



Ashley Stewart/Owatonna People's Press

Hope native Jake Larson visits the Steele County Free Fair in 2014. Before COVID, it was the time of year he regularly returned to Minnesota from California. Larson's earliest memory of the county fair was in 1932 during the Great Depression.

"A milkshake."

He sent Larson to sick call, where they diagnosed him with appendicitis. The hospital was five blocks away, but the ambulance didn't arrive until noon, and his appendix burst. He spent 10 days in the hospital.

He went home on sick leave, and, meanwhile, someone in the 135th noticed on his record that he could type. He was transferred to Headquarters Company and reported to Capt. Ray J. Erickson, who promoted Larson to corporal. Erickson was the company commander.

The company clerks all worked in the same building, near the regimental commander, who would tell the company clerks to tell the company commanders.

The Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941, and the regimental commander authorized 15-day furloughs to anyone who hadn't had one in the last year.

But Erickson ordered Larson to make the passes out for seven days, despite the orders from the big brass.

"Sir," Larson told him. "We are 1,000 miles from home in the middle of winter. It takes three days to get home."

"Corporal," Erickson replied. "You do as you are told."

"Yes, sir." He found 50 or so guys who qualified for the furloughs. He made out 55 papers, and Erickson signed them all, including one for himself for 15 days.

"This changed my life," Larson said. "I wouldn't be talking to you."

He got back and had his corporal stripes ripped off. Erickson said he should court-martial him, but Larson said he would welcome that.

"They were all signed by you," he told him.

"You will be climbing up poles and stringing wire," Erickson said.

The entire 34th Infantry Division went to Fort Dix, New Jersey. He got to see New York — the Statue of Liberty, the Empire State Building, Times Square — and on Feb. 9, 1941, a French luxury liner called the SS Normandie. It burned and capsized. The U.S. had renamed

it USS Lafayette and was converting it into a troop transport. The fire was started by a welding torch igniting a stack of life vests.

The 34th crossed the Atlantic aboard the RMS Aquitania, with many men sleeping on hammocks. It was part of a convoy, and Larson volunteered to work in the galley. A German submarine, he said, came within a half mile, and the ship dropped depth charges.

"The whole ship moved over each time," Larson said.

The ship was supposed to land in Londonderry, Northern Ireland, but the harbor was full of ships under repair, so they went to Glasgow, Scotland, got on smaller boats, then went to Londonderry.

He was anticipating being a wire dog when he was sent to a replacement unit to sell G.I. insurance in Ballymena — to Americans who had joined British and Canadian forces before the U.S. entered WWII and now wished to transfer to U.S. forces — for the month of November 1942.

He went back to HQ Company in Armagh for two days, then got word of a new assignment. He was sent to G3 of V Corps, to be the only operations sergeant in G3. He would be from the 1st Infantry Division and wear the Big Red 1 patch on his shoulder.

In the continental staff system, 3 is operations. The G meant he would be around a lot of generals.

When it came time to plan the D-Day invasion at Portsmouth, England, Col. John G. Hill took Larson, an E-5 buck sergeant, with him. He was given the highest security clearance: BIGOT. (It's an English wordplay on "To Gibraltar," which played an early part of the war.)

Sgt. Larson was from the infantry, so G3 sent him to .50-cal machine gun training at Land's End. He felt that any training would help him survive.

Then G3 sent him to participate in the secretive Operation Tiger, a rehearsal for the D-Day invasion. The English picked Slapton Sands because its beach was similar to Utah Beach at Normandy. Landing exercises began, and in the first wave, there were three LSTs abreast. Larson was in the left one. Behind him were several more waves.

Instead of the British greeting him with test fire, two German ships sunk the two landing crafts alongside his, while his ship was shot up. In all, 746 Allied men were killed that day and

200 wounded.

When Larson returned, a colonel swore him and others to secrecy. The incident had skeptics when the veil of secrecy lifted in the 1980s, and historians would challenge tales about the incident. But the German victory at Slapton Sands today is considered fact.

"For 40 years, I kept that a secret," he said. "I'm alive to prove it. I'm loaded with information, and there's no benefit to making up something like this."

On D-Day, Larson was on the N-com — the Navy command ship USS Augusta with Col. Hill, and even Lt. Gen. Omar Bradley was on that ship.

But the soldiers from the Big Red One were supposed to be on Omaha Beach. V Corps was in charge of Omaha Beach, with the 1st and 29th divisions under it.

"Yes, the little boy from Hope was the operations sergeant for Omaha Beach," he said.

With waves rising four or five feet up and down, 30 men on the command ship got on an LCI, and a Navy pilot guided it in circles. They didn't reach the beach until 10 a.m.

(For reference, the end of the naval bombardment and the start of the first landings were around 6:30 a.m.)

They jumped out and were in water up to their chests.

"He let us off too far out," Larson said.

The water sprang. Germans were shooting at them. They fell in line and got on the beach.

"Your only concern is, am I stepping in the same step the guys ahead of me are?" he said.

Now and then, you saw the spray of sand and water. Somebody had stepped on a mine.

He said the soldiers were to have bomb craters to hide in, but the Air Forces had missed. There was not a single crater. He found a little berm of sand.

"I'm behind this little thing, and two German machine gunners — one on the left and one on the right — had me plugged in, but that little berm protected me," Larson said.

Everyone smoked during the war, and he decided it was a good time for one, but his matches were wet. There was a soldier at his feet.

"Buddy, you got a match?"

There was no answer. Larson turned his head to look.

"There was no head under that helmet. I think that soldier for getting me up and running," he said.

He darted to the cliffs and made it. He said he must have picked a moment the machine gunners were changing ammo or else just lucky.

"That dead soldier, his soul saved my life, so help me God," Larson said.

When he and other soldiers got to the top of the cliffs, they were met by protection from the other direction.

That night, Larson and Cpl. Madison Rich started digging foxholes to sleep underground. He found a litter, another word for stretcher, and was ready to put his sleeping bag in the hole when the command post called for Sgt. Larson, already weary from surviving the beach. It was Col. Hill.

"I got word from 1st Army that we are in charge of Omaha and Utah Beach," he said. "First Army wants me to keep G3 open 24 hours a day. You will run the night shift from 7:30 p.m. to 7:30 a.m."

He told Cpl. Rich to sleep in his foxhole.

"I got my fart sack all ready for you," he said.

Rich didn't take the offer but placed his M-1 rifle on Jake's litter.

He finally got to have cigarettes during his night shift. He also got to try some Applejack 195 proof booze. Overnight, a German recon plane dropped handkerchief magnesium flares and anti-aircraft fire shot at them.

In the morning, when they changed shifts, they found falling shrapnel had busted Rich's rifle in two.

Right away, troops were having a hard time with the big German tanks, and the Americans were fighting their way toward St. Lô. A month later, a terrible storm took out the Mulberry harbors at the Normandy beaches.

One night, Larson went to bed in a ditch. He woke up in a field hospital with pneumonia. The ditch was flooded out.

"Penicillin was new!" Larson exclaimed. "My God, it was a miracle drug for me."

Dentists saw he had a cavity and ended up breaking his tooth. They gave him gas so they could chisel out the tooth. He had a hard time moving his mouth after that but recovered over the course of a couple of days.

He went to the major in charge of the field hospital.

"I am ready to go back to my unit. Can I get a Jeep?"

The major told him he would go to a replacement unit like everyone else. Larson asked to use a telephone. He dialed G3 and asked for Col. Hill and explained what the major had told him. The colonel asked for the major.

Larson heard the major say, "Yes, sir. Yes, sir. Yes, sir. Yes, sir. Yes, sir. Right away, sir."

The major rang the motor pool. "Send a Jeep."

He turned to Larson and said, "Sergeant, get your stuff brought in. There's a Jeep to bring you back to your unit."

Allied forces captured St. Lô, and Larson again was sleeping in a ditch. He woke up and someone asked him what he was doing down there.

Continued on Page 9



German Army used legions of horses

Continued from Page 8

“A 155 mm shell didn’t go off, and we’re going to sand-bag it and blow it up,” the guy told him.

“I got the hell out of there,” Larson said.

He thanked the Czechs. He knows many of them “forgot” to insert firing pins when making German bombs.

After St. Lô, Allies bottled up the Germany Army, and Larson said he still cannot believe the number of horses killed. The Germans had used horses to save fuel. Despite the fame of German tank and motorized divisions, the truth was the vast majority of the Heer got around on hoof and foot. It is believed to be the greatest use of horses in war in human history.

Then came Paris, then the Battle of Luxembourg, the Battle of Eupen in Belgium, then Aachen, Germany. Larson was at the V Corps command post near these battles but luckily was not in the fights.

Sgt. Larson was on duty when actress Marlene Dietrich visited. He had been away from home for three years at this point and missed this slice of America. He was also on shift at midnight Dec. 16 when the Battle of the Bulge commenced.

At 2 a.m., a Military Police corporal drove up to the G3 command post, slammed on the brakes and, in his excitement, saluted Larson.

“Sergeant, I am here from Post 6, where we looked up and saw German parachutes coming down. I decided to drive up here.”

Larson immediately woke up Col. Hill from his slumber in a sleeping truck. Hill told him to wake up Gen. Leonard T. Gerow, commander of V Corps. Gerow and Hill got together and alerted the Allied divisions.

“We saved a lot of lives,” he said.

Finally, Larson was going home, but the war was not over. He received a 45-day leave and arrived at Fort Snelling on April 13, 1945. The Pentagon called a captain at the fort with a choice for Sgt. Larson. The officer told Larson he could be sent back to V Corps or take a discharge.

“I figured I had lucked out so far. I was alive and had been there for three years. I’ll take the discharge.”

He hopped on a bus and went home to Hope.

“Surprise! I’m out of the service,” he told his family.

He was out, but he remembers his time reporting to Col. Hill fondly: “I have never worked with a better officer in my life.



Jake Larson at the 75th anniversary of the Normandy invasion. His jacket has a 34th Infantry Division patch. He received the Bronze Star for his service at Normandy.

He was more like my dad to me. I never heard him cuss someone out. He always explained things in an ordinary voice. I couldn’t have been more honored.”

Larson married his wife, Lola, on Nov. 23, 1945.

With his father farming and his older brother working cows, Jake decided to pursue an education at the Dunwoody Institute in Minneapolis. He was trained to become a lineman. He got a job with Austin Municipal Utility as a lineman, then becoming a journeyman lineman. He was in charge of circuit breakers from 1949 to 1953.

He was lured away to work in TV repair for Herb Ferris Radio & TV, being paid \$125 weekly, and he could set his own hours. He handled all the service calls.

In 1957, Larson had a two-week vacation, and he, his wife, and their son and daughter went on a road trip to see people they knew in Houston, the border of Mexico, Phoenix and Los Angeles. Then they drove 500 miles north to the Bay Area, where a sister and brother of his lived. The sister and her husband ran a print shop.

On the way home, they visited Yellowstone National Park and the Black Hills. It was a 6,000-mile trip, and when they got home, Ferris drove up and said, “Jake, I’m going to kill myself.”

“What in the world are you

talking about now?” Larson asked.

Ferris was having marital troubles with his wife, Melba, and asked Larson to run the store for two weeks. He did, and he even managed to help the police with their radio late one night. Herb and Melba made up. She came back to do the books, while Larson caught up on service calls.

At 5:15 p.m. one night, Melba told Larson that \$5 was missing from till during the time Larson watched over the store. Melba said he owed \$5 to the till.

Larson said no way and went to go home but heard her say, “I’ll just take it out of your paycheck.”

He went home and told Lola. “What are you going to do about it?” she asked.

“I feel like putting the house up for sale and moving to California,” he replied.

“OK, let’s do it.”

They moved to Martinez and got into the printing business with his sister. Long story short, he retired after 30 years as a master printer. He and Lola ended up having a third child, a boy, out in the Golden State.

Larson shook hands with President Donald Trump when the commander-in-chief visited Normandy in June 2019. Larson was featured on local Bay Area news outlets.

Larson’s Army records were destroyed in a 1973 fire in St. Louis, so the Army couldn’t fund his trip to Normandy. The news stories tell how friends at the Bagle Street Café raised funds online to pay for his flight. You can find a clip of by searching “Jake Larson ww2” on Google.

You’ll also find reporter Anthony Mason of “CBS This Morning” did a moving segment on him visiting the beach for the first time in 75 years.

Larson said his book, “The Luckiest Man Alive,” comes out in December. Check Amazon for its listing.

Why Latvia needed to get into NATO

Riga, capital of Latvia, is at 58 degrees north latitude. Minneapolis is at 45 degrees. This means Latvia is just about 800 miles north of here — in North America it puts one in the middle of Hudson Bay, Canada.

Latvia is 24,000 square miles or about 30 percent of the land area of Minnesota. It has 2.5 million people, 60 percent of whom are ethnic Latvians. I was born in Latvia and am a citizen. The official language is Latvian — really one of the oldest languages in Europe.

Latvia is on a flat coastal plane bordering the Baltic Sea and currently borders Estonia, Lithuania, Belarus and, alas, Russia. Historically one big country or another has ruled Latvia — Sweden, Germany, Poland and Russia.

Latvia has been independent twice, all because of world circumstances. World War I gave Latvia its freedom from 1918 to 1940. Then the Russians came back, staying until the implosion of the Soviet Union at the end of 1991. This is important as it was the implosion of the Soviet Union, not of Russia.

World War II caused much turmoil after the Russians took over in 1940 and incorporated us (which the U.S. never recognized); the Nazis came in 1941 followed by the Russians again. A history professor at the University of Wisconsin created an Occupation Museum in Riga, patterned after the Holocaust Museum, to show the horrors of occupation.

Imagine a little country having to deal with both Stalin

and Hitler; my grandmother was murdered by Nazis.

Russia has a land area 300 times that of Latvia and a population 70 times Latvia’s. What can I say that’s nice? Very little, I’m afraid.

To me Russia has always been a criminal enterprise, a country ruled by a few for their own benefit. It has worn different mantles — first the czars, then communism, and now an ersatz democracy.

I like what Sen. John McCain once said: “I looked into Putin’s eyes and saw KGB,” not what President George W. Bush said, who claims to have seen his soul. I liken Putin to a corrupt small-town southern sheriff in Mississippi in the 1950s who is supported by a bunch of rednecks and has only natural resources to sell.

I look at Russia not only as a Latvian, but as a U.S. businessman who ran a business in Moscow and have been there numerous times. I once met a Russian mafia wheeler-dealer type once who told me, “John, I had Mercedes under communism. I have Mercedes now. It’s all the same.”

The Russians have driven their best people into exile. Israel thrives today because of all the high-tech savvy Russian Jews that have gone to Israel. Has anyone heard the name Sergei Brin? He’s a Russian Jew, son of a brilliant mathematician and the co-founder of

Google, which many of us use. This is the type of talent Russia lost.

Adding to this tapestry is the Russian characteristic of stradat — to suffer. If the American characteristic is “can do,” stradat makes the Russian people willing to suffer at the hands of bad regimes. Even today 70 percent of Russians support Putin even though most lead lives of quiet desperation; Russian men, on average, live to be 56 years of age — most die from drinking lousy vodka, which can also be used as a paint thinner.

Today most of the intelligent people have fled Russia, been silenced or murdered, and we are left with a Second World country, which exports natural resources (oil and gas) and has nuclear weapons. Worse, it then riles up the natives whenever necessary to rant against the Baltic States or the Chechens or lately the Georgians and Ukrainians. And instead of threatening the West with nuclear weapons, it does something better, it threatens to cut off oil and gas, particularly to Western Europe.

John Freivalds is an honorary consul of Latvia in Minnesota. He resides in Orono.

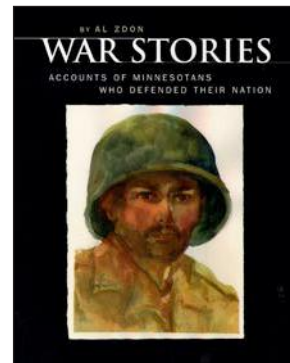
Guest Column

John Freivalds

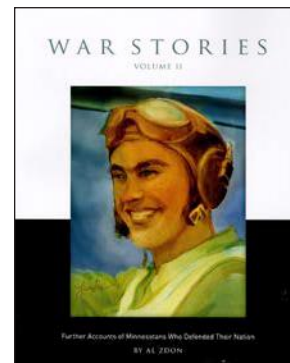


A great Christmas gift!

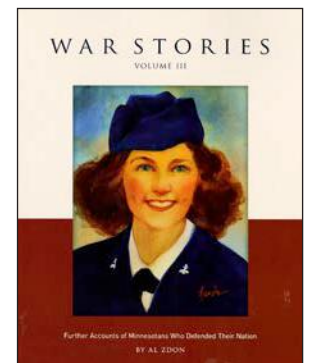
Order yours today!



War Stories
Vol. 1
\$40



War Stories
Vol. 2
\$25



War Stories
Vol. 3
\$20

Please cut out form, mail it in with the enclosed check

Select: Vol. 1 Vol. 2 Vol. 3

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____

Mail to:
The American Legion Dept. of Minnesota
20 W. 12th St. Room 300-A
St. Paul, MN 55155-2000



Jake Larson had top clearance when he worked as a clerk at the U.S. Army headquarters in Portsmouth, England. His typing skills led to working with Col. John G. Hill.



Russell Rahrman put decals for branches of the military, including the new U.S. Space Force.



This photo on the wall of Millville Post 579's entrance shows fire engulfing the former Legion Hall in 1965. It even had a classic 7-UP sign out front.

Millville Legion Hall burns

A story in the July 1, 1965, issue of The Plainview News detailed the fire that destroyed the Millville American Legion Hall. It said:

The Millville American Legion building, built around 1900, was totally destroyed by fire Monday, June 28. The alarm was sounded at about 12 noon when smoke was noticed oozing from underneath the eaves by David Wadley, Millville area farmer. ...

The Plainview and Elgin firemen combined forces with fire fighters from Zumbro Falls, Lake City and Rural Fire Department of Rochester to save the Schuchard home and the building to the east of the destroyed hall. Some damage to the roof and interior of the garage was reported, but this was not extensive.

The destroyed hall, measuring 40 by 100 feet, was owned during the 1900s by individual members of the Woodmen Lodge until its purchase by A.R. Schleicher of Millville who sold it to the American Legion in 1947. The Legion had built an additional smaller meeting and lunch room to the rear of the main structure.

Cause of the fire has not been determined. It was pointed out that the building had just been rewired about a year ago.

In discussing the loss of the building with several members of the Millville American Legion, it was indicated that the organization would replace the old hall with a new one, "not as high."



American Legion Post 579 in Millville decided the COVID-19 shutdown was a good time to restore the bar.

Setting the bar high

Member restores a cherished part of Millville Post 579

By Tim Engstrom

MILLVILLE — The American Legion is far more than bars. Legionnaires serve veterans and their communities through the Four Pillars: Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation, National Security, Americanism and Children & Youth.

For Posts with bars, proceeds from bar, banquet and restaurant operations go toward these causes.

Some of the bars are pretty much ordinary countertops, but some are indeed interesting and have backstories. The bar at Millville Post 579 is among them.

Member Russell Rahrman, 69, an Air Force veteran of the Vietnam era who was stationed in Germany, likes furniture restoration. His Post sought bids for restoring the banquet hall's bar, but instead gave him the job. He had never done a bar before.

The Post 579 bar now has emblems for The American Legion and each branch of the U.S. military, even Space Force. It has the POW/MIA prayer, and it has some other patriotic imagery.

"I have a wild imagination, and this is what my imagination turned out to be," said Rahrman, a Rochester resident who grew up in Millville.

He learned restoring a bar is much harder than a table or a chair.

"A bar is the most-abused piece of furniture," he said. "At first, I intended to do



Russell Rahrman stands behind the bar he restored. One side of the bar is dedicated to POW/MIA and, in front of him, is the POW/MIA Prayer.

the bartop, but I ended up doing the whole bar. I left the gouges and cigarette burns to give it character."

When he started in May, he wanted this one to be like one on the TV show

"Cheers," where a bartender could slide a mug down the countertop. He put 14 layers of floor varnish to get the slide effect while protecting the decals.

He finished the work in June, then let it set for 90 days to let the varnish cure — a fortunate upside of the COVID-19 pandemic. Then he buffed two coats of wax.

The bar is dedicated to Harley N. Diedrich, a Marine who died in 2001 at age 73. He was responsible for finding the bar 54 years ago.

Millville Post 579 was established in 1946, with Post home on Division Street purchased the next year. Eighteen years later it burned to the ground. It was front-page news for the region. The Post decided to rebuild, and Diedrich, who worked in construction in his civilian job, found the bar in Rochester and brought it to the new banquet hall.

"I figure it's got to be over 100 years old now," Rahrman said.

The bar survived a fire at the Post home five or six years ago. It started in the ceiling above the women's restroom — the cause was never determined but it likely was faulty wiring — and it caused \$200,000 in damage.

The pandemic ended up canceling Millville's plans to celebrate turning 150 in 2020. Millville Valley Post 579 turns 75 in 2021. Its members are hoping to celebrate the milestone next summer.



The POW/MIA emblem graces the countertop.



A marker says the bar is dedicated in memory of Harley N. Diedrich, who donated it in 1966.