



Legionnaire

Volume 99, Number 4

For God and Country

April 2017

State Convention heading back to Mahnommen casino

The 2017 Department of Minnesota Convention will be held at the Shooting Star Casino Events Center in Mahnommen on July 13-15.

The official hotel for the Legion and Auxiliary is the Shooting Star Casino and Hotel. Those attending the convention must make their own reservations by calling 1-800-453-7827 and referencing Block 1738. The room rate is \$85 a night.

The facility also has an RV park. Those interested should call the same number.

Registration is \$15 in advance, and a registration form is on Page 2 of this *Legionnaire*.

The convention will be preceded by an Department Executive Committee meeting on July 12. The convention is the annual business meeting for the Legion and Auxiliary and includes election of officers.

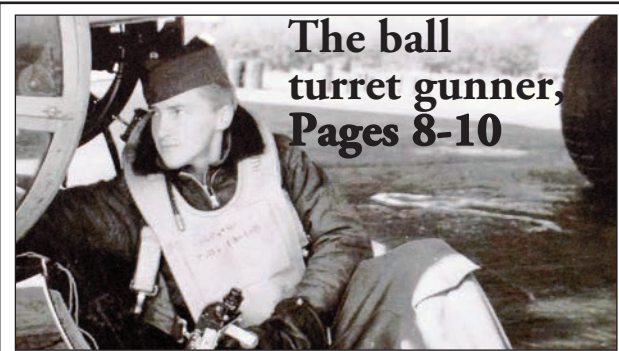
Twins Day May 19

The 17th annual American Legion Family Day at the Twins will be Friday night, May 19, at 7:10 p.m. in a game with the Kansas City Royals.

Commander Denise Milton will throw out the first pitch.

Tickets are \$23 for Home Plate View seats, a \$2 savings. Call 1-800-

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The ball turret gunner, Pages 8-10

Veterans on the Hill



Hundreds of veterans filled the Capitol Rotunda for the annual Veterans Day on the Hill in March.

Legislators tell veterans to get involved, stay involved in the bill-making process

The Capitol Rotunda was filled with veterans during the annual Day on the Hill in March, and the message from the legislators was for veterans to keep after their elected leaders to make sure the right bills are passed.

Department Commander Denise Milton, who is also the chair of the Commander's Task Force, was the moderator for the event.

Rep. Paul Marquart, DFL-Dilworth, said if veterans don't lobby, the lawmakers won't know if a bill is important. The only way they know is if there are people behind supporting it."

Sen. Bruce Anderson, R-Buffalo, chair of the Senate Veterans Committee, echoed that thought. It's prudent to follow these bills."

Rep. Kurt Daudt, R-Crown, the Speaker of the House, remarked on the Minnesota Historical Society's decision several months ago to keep the Civil War paintings in the Capitol. Common sense prevailed and the Civil War paintings have been restored to the Governor's Reception Room."

Daudt pointed to recent successes in the legislature including a bill that would list a veterans service on his driver's license, allowing him or her to qualify for veterans benefits without having to bring supporting paperwork.

He too urged veteran participation. Get engaged and stay engaged."

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Department training session slated for Legionville June 23-25

A Department-wide training session will be held at Legionville June 23-25.

The training will be aimed at post officers, but is open to anybody seeking to enhance their American Legion leadership skills.

"Effective leadership in our Posts is paramount to successful sustainment," said Jeff Gay, the chair of the training effort. The American Legion is equal opportunity and offers

a chance for any member to serve in the capacity of an officer at any Post, District, Department and ultimately at National.

The keys to successful leadership are knowledge, understanding, ability to project and selfless service. The ability to be respected for your unbiased ideas and actions is also an important key," Gay said.

Every Legion member is encouraged to attend the train-

ing to include current Post Officers and general membership. The opportunity for any member to become a Post Officer is ever present."

On the evening of the 23rd there will be a networking social [BYOB], opening remarks and agenda highlights. The session will continue all day the 24th and through noon on the 25th. There are social and personal networking

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Top Eagle Scout Chosen

Wyatt Steven Hahn, a junior at Hutchinson Senior High School, is the 2017 winner of The American Legion Eagle Scout of the Year in Minnesota.

Hahn, the son of Scott and Connie Hahn, Hutchinson, is eligible for the award through the service of his grandfather, John Henry Froemming.

Hahn will automatically be in the running for the National Eagle Scout of the Year award and a \$10,000 scholarship.

He earned his Eagle Scout Award in 2014 and has since added 10 Eagle Palms. His Eagle Scout project was to

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WYATT HAHN

Oratorical winner is from Baxter

A sophomore home-schooled student from Baxter won the 2017 Minnesota American Legion Oratorical Contest.

Elise Langtaa Sopelle, representing the Sixth District, will travel to Indianapolis to participate in the National Oratorical Contest on April 22-23.

As the state winner, she has already earned a \$1,500 scholarship, and she will receive an additional \$1,500 at the national contest and a chance to win the top prize of an \$18,000 scholarship.

Sopelle's prepared oration was titled "Through the Eyes of an Immigrant," and opened with the stories of immigrants who came to America in 1626, 1849 and in 1999.

The last story was about a Richard" who

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ELISE SOPELLE

Oratorical champion is home-schooler from Baxter

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came from Ghana in 1999. He comes from a village with no running water, limited electricity, dirt roads and no air conditioning. He yearned for a higher education and a brighter future, so he decided to immigrate to the land of opportunities: America."

Sopelle went on to tell how Richard is now the father of two, has a PhD, is a professor at a university and is now a proud American citizen.

And, The last story is special to me. Richard Sopelle is my father."

The Legion's Oratorical Contest focuses on the U.S. Constitution. The contestants give a prepared oration on a constitutional subject they choose, and then do a shorter talk on an assigned topic.

Sopelle is the daughter of Richard Sopelle and Deanne Joy. She has an older brother Aaron.

Sopelle said her best class is English and writing. Her speech coach is her mother and teacher, Deanne Joy. Sopelle has done local speaking at churches and senior homes. She takes scholastic courses on-line.



FINALISTS -- The four finalists hold their pins at the annual Department Oratorical Contest. From left: Department President Carol Kottom; fourth place winner Charles Babcock of Forest Lake; second place winner Emily Parker of Lino Lakes; champion Elise Sopelle; third place winner Ricky Erpelding of Kasson; Department Commander Denise Milton.

Legion Day at Twins May 19

Continued from Page 1

33-TWINS and hitO" to speak to an attendant. At the start of your call, reference the special American Legion promotion.

Credit cards are accepted, and there will be a \$5 service charge on each order.

Tickets will be mailed.

Every post represented at the game will get scoreboard recognition. Be sure to tell the Twins ticket seller your post information.

For groups of 25 or more, or for other information, call Nick Corcoran at 612-659-4083.

She enjoys roller blading, figure skating and reading. She likes to read science fiction, romances, utopian stories and historical fiction.

She was sponsored by Nisswa Post and Unit 627. I enjoy going to the post. The people are really nice, and the Auxiliary are really kindhearted people."

Sopelle has been involved in volunteer projects including quilting, preparing care packages and working in a soup kitchen.

The contest was held at the Anoka Post 102. There were seven contestants from the 10 districts.

Finishing second was Emily Parker of Lino Lakes, representing the Tenth District and Lino Lakes Post 566. She is home-schooled and is a junior. She earned a \$1,000 scholarship.

In third place was Ricky Erpelding of Kasson, representing the First District and Kasson Post 333. He is home-schooled, a junior, and received a \$700 scholarship.

In fourth place was Charles Babcock of Forest Lake, representing the Third District and Forest Lake Post 225. He is a sophomore at Forest Lake High School. He earned a \$500 scholarship.

The first round of the state contest was held earlier that day. The three contestants who did not make the finals were Cynthia Winch, Mankato, Second District, Lake Crystal Post 294; Hunter Holzer, Minneapolis, Fifth District, Minneapolis Post 1; Elysia Morris, Two Harbors, Eighth District, Deer River Post 122.

Kylee Kohls, Litchfield, Seventh District, was a district winner but was unable to attend the Oratorical Contest.

Eagle Scout chosen

Continued from Page 1

construct a wood storage shed for the Cedar Lake Conservation Club. He designed the shed and sought building materials from local businesses.

The volunteers, guided by Hahn, cleared brush and built the structure. I have received many compliments and heard many club members say that the wood shed was something that the club has needed for several years."

At school, Hahn has a 3.9 grade point average and is in the top seven percent of his class. He participated in band, concert band, jazz band, marching band, and the county honor band.

He lettered in tennis and trap shooting and participated in hockey. He was named the top male shooter" on the trap shooting team as well as the best overall shooter."

Hahn has been an academic letter winner and is a member of the National Honor Society, the Key Club, Student Council and he was a Minnesota State High School League EXCEL Award Finalist.

In the community, Hahn is a member of the Hutchinson Drift Riders Snowmobile Club and is a USA Hockey Minnesota District 5 official. He participates in Pheasants Forever, the National Wild Turkey Federation and Ducks Unlimited. He has been a Salvation Army Bell Ringer and has put flags on veterans graves at cemeteries for Memorial Day.

At his church, he has been in the church choir and played several instruments. He has volunteered at soup supper during lent.

Hahn said he will be pursuing an engineering degree with an interest in aerospace engineering. He has

not yet selected a college.

He was a Junior Patrol Leader in the Hutchinson Scouting program, and has recently become a Junior Assistant Scoutmaster. His Scoutmaster in Hutchinson said his leadership skills set him apart.

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MSADISLIT

State-wide training session scheduled for Brainerd in June

Continued from Page 1

times included throughout.

What's a training day without having a little fun too?" Gay said.

There is no cost for this event, however, Posts or Districts are encouraged to provide mileage for their attendees. Dorm lodging at Legionville will be at no charge and there are camping spots available on a first come first serve basis, call ahead to reserve a space in the dorm or a camping site. (218) 829-3094.

This instruction covers an array of topics all geared to

help members host and conduct the best possible business meetings as well as the basics of how you can promote, prepare press releases, raise funds, recruit and much more.

The training is condensed but will be as extensive as possible. It will provide attendees with information of where to research to find answers, best practices, increase productivity and garner support from your membership and community.

Efficiently run meetings are able to accomplish much more than a meeting that is run more like a gathering in an abbreviated form. An efficient meeting follows certain

protocol, has a written agenda, holds people and discussions to a time limit, creates an atmosphere of partnership and teamwork and does it all in less time. The training is not designed to make you follow a rigid practice but will provide hints, ideas and what ably the book" Legion meeting should look like and how it

works.

Other subjects at the session will include, but not limited to, understanding the Preamble, recruitment/membership, retention of members, wear of the Legion uniform (cap), planning fund raising activities, how to handle disruptive people, personal conduct vs. public perception.

The session will also touch on hot topics such as sexual harassment (non-gender specific as either gender can be at fault, to include unwelcome advances verbal or physical conduct.), discrimination, bullying, PII (Personal Identifying Information) or anything else which may be construed as a personal attack against another, either directly or indirectly, and which can cause an individual, and ultimately the post he/she represents, to be legally liable for perceived damages.

Seating is limited and getting numbers in advance helps the organizers plan for meals and layout.

Forms will be available soon on the Legion website.

The training weekend is also an opportunity for the Department to distribute 2017-2018 membership packets to the districts on Sunday.

OFFICIAL CONVENTION PRE-REGISTRATION

A registration fee of \$15 for each person attending, whether a delegate, alternate or a guest, must accompany this form. Make this check payable to CONVENTION CORPORATION. No credit cards will be accepted.

Registration at the door will be \$18.

Mail to:

Ron Hendrickson, Box 31, Waubun, MN 56589.

Legion Post # _____ SAL Sqdn. _____ Auxiliary Unit _____

District _____ Phone _____

Name _____

Address _____

City, State _____ Zip _____

Delegate Alternate Guest


Delegate at Large (Auxiliary)

(Please check one of the above.)

If additional pre-registrations accompany this request, this pre-registration form should be photo copied for each person. The \$15 registration fee should be enclosed for each person.

Please, only one registration blank per person.

I HAD A COMRADE



On April 18, let's pause to remember the 75th anniversary of the daring Doolittle Raid. Author Paul Sailer is honored that Doolittle's co-pilot, Richard E. Cole, wrote the foreword to his new book, *I Had a Comrade*. The 101-year-old is the only surviving member of the Raid.

Get your copy at: www.lodenbooks.com and get free shipping through Father's Day or buy the book at the Minnesota History Center in St. Paul.

Dick Cole, left, and Paul Sailer, Wings of the North Air Expo, July 16, 2016.

11 MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

5 FANTASTIC WAYS TO EXPERIENCE MNHS

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1 ADVOCATE FOR THE FORT
Ask your state legislators to support funding for Historic Fort Snelling and thank Gov. Dayton for his support at mnhs.org/HFS2020. Check mnhs.org/calendar for *World War II Roundtable* events at the fort.





WITNESS A BAR FIGHT
See storyteller Kevin Kling narrate *If WWI Was a Bar Fight*, Sat., April 8 & 22, Minnesota History Center, St. Paul.

2 STEP INTO THEIR LIVES
Explore *Minnesota's Greatest Generation: The Depression, the War, the Boom*, for true stories from an inspiring generation of Americans. On view at the Minnesota History Center, St. Paul.

4 USE YOUR DISCOUNT
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COMMANDER'S COLUMN

By Denise Milton



I think Spring has Sprung. I still see patches of snow and flurries during my travels throughout the state but there is definite evidence of Spring -- the garden seed catalogs say so. As do the flurry of Legion committee reports coming due in the next 2-3 months. Applications for Boys State, Legion Baseball and school safety patrol training at our one-of-a-kind training center at Legionville.

The National Commander has put out a call to all departments to have 100% reporting of Consolidated Post Reports (or more commonly referred to as CPRs). This is an important document to complete and mail in. This is our 'proof' of what we have done over the year for our veterans, their families, our communities and children and youth. Regardless if you are a post of less than 10 members or greater than 1,000 members, at least one member in that post has done something for a fellow veteran, child or community (gave a ride to an appointment, delivered a meal, put flags on the streets or in the cemeteries). It all counts -- report it. When we go to Washington D. C. this is our ammunition when the National Commander testifies to the Veterans Affairs committee on what we do and why we still need to continue the benefits for our veterans and their families. Thank you for your assistance in completing this important document.

New Post Officer Reports have recently been mailed out, please fill out completely and return by the deadline noted on form. This is Department and National offices way of communicating with you in the coming year. It is how you find out what is going on in the Legion.

Membership is going well. Nationally, we have been in 1st place quite often this past year and seldom dropping below 3rd place. We have met every National target goal, however, we are still lagging behind last year's goal by over 3,000 members. First off, I want to thank everyone for making membership a priority. Now I am asking that every member who reads this column this month get out and per-

sonally ask a veteran to renew their membership or become a new member. I know we can do it. We are all stakeholders in the greatest veteran service organization in the world. Let's make sure it remains that way.

Any member of the American Legion family who signs up three new members (can be in any combination of Legion, Auxiliary or SAL) will receive one of my Commander's pins. Have your post adjutant send in verification to the department or myself and we will have a pin sent out. Also you may get a personal call from the National Vice Commander or possibly the National Commander himself will call and thank you.

My project this year is Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans (MACV). It encompasses all 87 counties with three regional offices -- one in the Metro area, Mankato and Duluth and a small outreach office in Perham. They provide assistance to positively motivated veterans and their families who are homeless or experiencing other life crises. They provide direct services and collaborate with other service agencies to include The American Legion. They are a 501(C) 3 organization so it is okay to use gambling funds. Please make checks out the Minnesota American Legion Foundation -- Fund #82. Or if you wish to donate items please go to their email address: www.mac-v.org for a list of items needed at this time. Several Stand Downs have been scheduled throughout the state. We have two scheduled for April: Brainerd National Guard Armory on 25 April from 9am-2pm. and in Detroit Lakes at the Becker County Fairgrounds on 26 April from 8am-2pm. A new director for MAC-V was announced in February. It is recently retired Lieutenant General Neal Leibolt. I had the opportunity of meeting him and am looking forward to a successful year in ending homelessness of veterans in Minnesota. We are doing a great job now, we lead the nation by reducing homelessness by 57% from last year -- the national average is 47%. Way to go Minnesota.

Last but surely not the least: Do we have something exciting coming for you in the near future. We have scheduled a Department-wide training and education seminar for 23-25 June at Legionville and Brainerd. Please look for the article in this issue of the Legionnaire. This is entirely free to anyone who wishes to attend and it is strongly recommended that all incoming District Commanders attend. I am so revved up for this -- we haven't had this type of training in several years. I will be attending the entire session, and I look forward to seeing you all there.

As always, please keep our military and their families in your prayers as well as any our Legion Family who may need our prayers.

For God and Country.

Chaplain's Corner

By
Bill Brockberg



I Think I'm Write

Last month in my County Veterans Services Office I had a veteran walk in to inquire about a free Minnesota Fishing License for being recently adjudicated 100 percent service-connected disabled by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

I got on the internet and browsed the MN DNR website and I found the form the veteran could fill out and return to the DNR with the appropriate supporting paperwork. But that wasn't good enough. He asked if I could fill out the form on my desktop so all he would have to do is sign and have the form faxed back to the DNR. The form was not affillable" form so I printed it out for him to complete and return. He quickly scribbled all of his information on the form right then and there, and gave it back to me to fax with the accompanying copy of his driver's license and DVA Rating Decision letter.

After the veteran left I paused and thought, in this email, texting, Face Book and tweeting world, I wonder (along with family and friends who worked for or are still working for the U.S.P.S.) what is to become of the letter. I'm not really sure if, in my early years, learning to write letters was difficult because of my terrible penmanship or all the rules and guidelines to make the letter to perfect.

While the letter is a means of correspondence, the ancient Greeks developed the letter into an art form. Some of that beauty" can be seen in the New Testament Epistles (letters). But that is too much trouble, as I just want my letters to be like what I do with email or what I did for an impatient veteran last month.

Nowadays, I just want to sit down at my computer, type out a few sentences, hit send and get my reply in a few minutes. I like using my veterans' software information management system which automatically populates VA, federal and defense forms. I, like many people, don't want to take time to develop thoughts and sentences, let alone wait for more than a few minutes for the response with what I want.

People today want communication with a heavenly father to be like email. They don't want to take time to develop thoughts. They don't want to spend more than a few minutes waiting for a reply, but communication with a heavenly father or prayer is like a letter. It is composed and thoughtful, full of ideas and revelations. Just as letters can be some of the most profound pieces of art, so too can the communities we create. God calls us to be letters, letters of a new covenant being written on our hearts and impossible to hide, but to be seen, known and read by all. What we pray and do speaks volumes to a world seeking truth about a living God. When people read the letter that composes our life, what are they reading? Is it support, sacrifice, hope or confidence in a charitable American Legion given through a gracious Heavenly Father?

You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, to be known and read by all; and you show that you are a letter of Christ, prepared by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the Living God, not on tablets of stone but on human hearts. Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God. Not that we are competent of ourselves to claim anything as coming from us. Our competence is from God, who has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant." 2 Cor. 3:2-6

Mail Call

Editor's note: Mike Ohstad is a Past National Chaplain of The American Legion. He recently received a letter from Sweden.

Legionnaire reach

To the Editor:

I enclose a copy of a letter I received some months ago from a Swedish newspaper photographer. You will note that heread the very interesting story about (me) at Hiroshima..." in the *Minnesota Legionnaire*. The story was From Hinckley to Hiroshima."

The Swedish newsman's communication with me is a tribute not only to the reach" of the *Minnesota Legionnaire* newspaper, but, clearly the quality of your writing.

Michas Ohnstad
North Branch

The letter, in part:

I am writing to you because I think your the son of Eva Linnae Broberg from Enanger in Sweden.

I am not a relative, but I am living in your mother's house in Enanger. My family and I bought it from your mother's sister's daughter in 1997. My name is Ulf Borin and I have been working as a photographer at the newspaper in Hudiksvall for the last 40 years.

I started looking on the internet and found pictures and followed her from Bergan in Norway to Ellis Island and then to Minnesota. And when I found out her new name, Ohnstad, I saw that you are Mr. Michas Onstad, her son and are still alive. I have read the very interesting story about you in Hiroshima after the atomic bomb in the *Minnesota Legionnaire*. When you studied in Uppsala, did you visit your mother's home in Enanger and meet some of her relatives? Can you tell me some of your memories of your mother and her life in America and if she ever talked about her life in Sweden?

Ulf Borin
Enanger, Sweden

Legitimate service

To the Editor:

The American Legion Department of Minnesota has contracted with Publishing Concepts (PCI) to reach out to

its members to update member information and produce a new membership Then and Now publication.

We want to assure you that this is a legitimate, contracted service, approved by the Department in order to gather important information that can be used to better serve you and future members. The agreement is offered at no cost to the Posts or the Department HQ. PCI is helping The Department of Minnesota by gathering information (currently over 15,000 email addresses and 600 new home addresses) that will save money and hopefully slow down the frequency of needed dues increases.

PCI is also providing the Department with valuable information that can be used for the American Legion Centennial in 2019. The Department can use the pictures and stories that you submit to show the Minnesota Pride of being a Legionnaire.

Another positive example of our relationship is that PCI has renewed over 160 members and added 100 new members through our outreach to your expired membership lists. We have helped guide numerous veterans to additional services available to them in your State.

We at PCI are dedicated to serving you, our clients. So we are making changes to our telephone scripts that are more in tune with the Minnesota American Legion Culture. When you contact PCI, It is your choice on how much information you want to put in the publication. You also have the option, during your call to PCI, not to be in the publication. You can choose to be in the publication and not purchase or be in the publication and purchase.

Your information will be kept confidential, only used for this program. All data collected and all data provided to PCI is the property of The American Legion Department of Minnesota and will not be used by PCI for any other purpose than this project with The American Legion Department of Minnesota.

Drew Clancy
President, PCI

The Minnesota Legionnaire

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Al Zdon, Editor

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What's Happening

Round Tables

The St. Croix Valley Civil War Roundtable will meet April 24 at the Lowell Inn in Stillwater. The program will be "Modern Military Methods of Gen. James Longstreet" and the speaker will be LTC Harold Knudson.

Call Steve at 715-386-1268 to make reservations for the dinner meeting.

There will be a Civil War Symposium at the Fort Snelling History Center on Saturday, April 8 beginning at 9:15 a.m. Registration is \$10 and advanced registration is recommended. Dinner is \$15 and is limited to the first 100 paid reservations. Contact TCCWRT at 5540 Sanibel Drive, Minnetonka, MN 55343. Or go to the Minnesota Historical Society website and search for Civil War Symposium.

The World War II History Round Table will meet April 13 at the Fort Snelling History Center at 7 p.m. The program will be "Last Mission of Jerk's Natural, 93rd Bomb Group" with speaker Gregg Jones. Admission is \$5.

Traveling Trunk

The Minnesota Military Museum has a "traveling trunk" and will loan artifacts loaded in trunks to schools, libraries or organizations for displays or use by students. The artifacts can be from the Civil War, World Wars I and II, and the Vietnam War.

Go to the military history museum's website: www.mnmilitarymuseum.org for more information.

Woman Veteran of the Year

The Women's Veteran Initiative is seeking nominations for its Woman Veteran of the Year award for 2017. The award honors military service, leadership in women's veteran issues and community service. The award is presented at a spring event.

For more information, write to: womenveteransinitiative@gmail.com.

Clinic and Stand Downs

The Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans will have two Stand Downs and one free legal clinic coming up.

The Stand Downs are Wednesday, April 26, from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Becker County Fairgrounds in Detroit Lakes

and at the National Guard Armory in Brainerd, same times, on Tuesday, April 25. The Stand Downs include free meals, haircuts, clothing, info on VA benefits, driver's licenses, chaplaincy and employment assistance.

The Legal Clinic will be held on Tuesday, April 11, in Minneapolis at the VA Medical Center, Flag Atrium Balcony Room, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. The legal advice will include housing, employment, benefits, wills, debt collection and family law.

For more information, call 651-200-4750.

Armed Forces Day

The 8th annual Armed Forces Day will be held at Dundas on Saturday and Sunday, May 20-21. There will be re-enactors, military vehicles, authors, veterans, a military swap meet and Civil War artillery. Admission for adults is \$10 or \$8 if you bring a non-perishable food item. For more information, go to www.ricecountyww11.yola.stie.com.

Military Ball

The 13th annual Military Ball at Spring Grove will be held Saturday, April 22, at the Fest Building. The events will include dinner, a ceremony, entertainment, displays, photo portraits and more.

All military service members and veterans are invited as well as families. Attire is Sunday best, and many will wear their military uniform.

Cost is \$27 per person. Attendance is by reservation only and RSVPs must be made by April 8. For more information call Gary at 507-498-3461 or email gnjlbux@springgrove.coop.

St. Cloud VA Fair

The St. Cloud VA is seeking employees and has scheduled a career fair on Saturday, April 22, from 9 a.m. until noon at the Rasmussen College in St. Cloud.

Pre-registration is not required. On the spot interviews for clinical positions will be held. For more information, contact Mandi at 320-252-1670, Ext. 6571.

American Legion College

Candidates are being sought from Minnesota for The American Legion College, which will be held in

Indianapolis beginning Oct. 29.

Candidates should be from Lebanon/Grenada, Panama, and or Gulf War or War on Terrorism eras. He or she must be a paid up member of the Legion. The Department will pay the tuition. Candidates from other war eras may be submitted if a younger veteran has been accepted to the college.

For more information, contact Jennifer Kelley at Department Headquarters, 651-291-1800.

Operation Post Home

Do you know of a post that did something special for a veteran in need or any other good cause? Operation Post Home is seeking stories on posts that have done good things for a veteran or their community.

For more information, contact Chairman Glenn Mueller, 507-932-4301 or email glm01311962@gmail.com.

Coast Guard Reunion

The Twin Cities U.S. Coast Guard Veterans Group is having its 5th annual reunion on Saturday, June 10, at the Hopkins VFW. All ex-Coasties and relatives are welcome. Contact Mike Roberts at 320-654-9399 or email at: mike.roberts41@gmail.com for more information.

Poetry Contest

The sixth annual poetry contest for Minnesota students is being sponsored again by Sen. Al Franken. This year's theme is "Celebrating the Veteran in my Life."

The contest is open to all students K-12, with three age categories. Those selected will be invited to a reception at Sen. Franken's St. Paul Office with a chance to meet the senator and Minnesota Poet Laureate Joyce Sutphen and others.

To enter, send the poem to poetry@franken.senate.gov and indicate your age. Or they can be mailed to Franken's Office at 60 Plato Blvd. E., Suite 220, St. Paul, MN 55107. Participants can only submit one poem with a 250-word limit.

Entries should include name, parent/guardian name, phone number, and name of the child's school. For more information, call Marc Kimbell, 651-221-2649.

Adult Day Care at Minneapolis winner of two Minnesota awards

Participants of the Adult Day Center on the campus of the Veterans Home in Minneapolis were winners of two awards. The first in 2016 was "The State Government Innovation Award" and most recently, a "Stars Among Us Innovation Award" from Leading Age Minnesota. Both awards for its Operation Sight and Sound project that brings together Veterans on a mission of artistic discovery.

"The Innovation Award recognizes programs that transform and enhance the experience of aging," said Gayle Kvenvold, President and CEO, LeadingAge Minnesota. "Through Operation Sight and Sound, the Minnesota Veterans Home Adult Day Center gave our most honored

citizens – our Veterans – the opportunity to continue to serve others, remain connected to their community and be validated for the contributions they continue to make today."

Operation Sight and Sound, conducted in collaboration with Minnesota artist and musician Charlie McGuire, is an interactive program that brings together Veterans ranging from World War II to the Vietnam area on an artistic mission. The program encourages self-expression, recognition and service by each Veteran on topics that personally interest them.

Over the course of a few months, Veterans participated

in group songwriting and photography sessions to help them communicate their stories. The photos were made into a flag as a movable art gallery. The songs and flag were then taken on the road to various locations, including a live performance at the Minnesota State Fair. In the end, more than 500 people over the course of three months viewed the movable art gallery of Veterans' stories.

"Operation Sight and Sound gave participants a sense of purpose and increased self-confidence. The families of our Veterans continue to comment on the positive impact the program has had on their loved ones," Jodi Kritzeck, Recreation Therapist, Minnesota Veterans Home Adult Day Center.

The Adult Day Center hours of operation are Monday through Friday: 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and provides much needed respite and full array of supportive services for Veterans' caregivers.

If interested and want to learn more, please contact Ann Rostratter at 612-548-5900.

In Memorium

When I first came to work at the Department of Minnesota, and was just learning the ropes of this organization, I had the fortune to meet and spend time with the Department's historian.

Alice Anderson was a dynamo. She was past commander of Westphal Post 251, and had been elected Department Historian four times. She was at many Department conventions and national conventions.

I rarely went to a Legion event when Alice and Ralph Anderson weren't there. What I remember was her unflinching kindness to me, and her willingness to help me learn more about this organization.

She was full of energy, funny, and she knew her stuff. The scrapbooks she produced for the commanders were works of art.

Alice was a World War II veteran of the Army Air Corps. She was 95 when she died last month. She and Ralph had been living in Owasso, Oklahoma.

I'll never forget Alice and her sparkling eyes and her joyful manner. She liked people and people liked her. I know I sure did.

-- Al Zdon



AWARD WINNER -- Muscian Charlie McGuire leads a group of veterans in song as part of the Operation Sight and Sound at the Adult Day Care at the Minnesota Veterans Home in Minneapolis.

American Legion Riders

By Chuck Stone
Department Director



Greetings American Legion Family, We are one month closer to the Department of Minnesota Legacy ride. The committee has been hard at work establishing a routes, rest stops, gas stops and overnights. We will not be doing a north weekend or south weekend. Our routes are taking on much different patterns around Minnesota. We simply call it Weekend One and Weekend Two. Walker Spencer-Ross Post 134 will be hosting the Kick-off celebration this year on Thursday July 27th. Friday July 28th the Riders will visit Park Rapids, Detroit Lakes, Moorhead, Fergus Falls (Veterans Home), Underwood/Battle lake (fuel stop only) Long Prairie, Sauk Center and overnight in Wilmar. Saturday July 29th the Riders will visit New London/Spicer, Silver Lake (newly formed chapter), Glencoe, Arlington and overnight in New Ulm. Sunday July 30th the Riders will visit Springfield, Fulda, Mankato (SAL car show) and Cleveland (special visit to Jack Zimmerman) before ending in Owatonna. Weekend two is still under construction but we can safely say Jeremy Christenson and Delano Post 377 will host our stand down celebration. Hopefully next month I can give you a full rundown of weekend two. If you like you may come join us at Bricelyn Post 165 Sunday April 9th at 1 p.m. for our next planning committee meeting.

With spring in the air calendars are filling up fast with testimonial dinners. These are great times to get out and honor those that have given so much of their time to the American Legion Family. Without their generous gift of time and leadership we would not be the great family we are today. I heard a rumor the Auxiliary President Carol Kottom will be riding with us on the back of her son's bike. He is a SAL member.

I briefly alluded to a new Riders Chapter earlier, congratulations to Silver Lake on their charter. Thank you to Steve "Sully" for helping them along the way. I look forward to seeing the Silver Lake Riders on the Legacy Run and hopefully a few other events too.

If you know of children that are eligible for Legacy Scholarships this year please remind them the deadline to apply is April 20th. New this year: Children of post-9/11 veterans with a VA disability rating of 50% or higher are also eligible for Legacy Scholarships. Go to www.legion.org/scholarships/legacy for information.

Keep the chrome side up and the rubber side down.



Minnesotan honored in Legion Mag

Teri Hlavka, the adjutant at Chanhassen Post 580, has been featured in the April issue of the American Legion Magazine on page 10.

Hlavka, who was a Harrier jet mechanic in the Marine Corps, became active in the post after her service.

The story, by Editor Jeff Stoffer, profiles Hlavka and how the post helped her adjust to civilian life.

OCW grant in Minneapolis



The Minnesota American Legion obtained an Operation Comfort Warrior grant for Lance Corporal Kyle Anderson, center, of the Marine Corps. Anderson was wounded in combat. He will receive Ereader software that will enable him to read better and use other capabilities. In front is Bryan Fay, director of the assistive technology program, and in back is David Schafer, speech pathologist. Operation Comfort Warrior is a program that can purchase necessary items for wounded warriors.



BOWLING TOURNEY UNDERWAY -- The 2017 Minnesota American Legion Bowling Tournament is ongoing at Sundance Lanes in Dayton. One of the participants is Lenny Wirtz from Elk River Post 112. Wirtz is 91 and has been bowling since 1982.

Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

By
Jeremy Wolfsteller



Burn pits -- the new Agent Orange?

It's no secret that with each armed conflict the United States enters overseas, there is going to be some environmental hazards that go along with the job. I remember my first combat tour to Iraq in 2003 as it was yesterday. Scared, excited, nervous and anxiety describe some of my emotions as I sat on a long 20-hour flight to the Middle East. We were trained to understand the enemy's behavior and how to combat them, while little focus was on the environment and conditions that we would live in for months on end. From the first step off the plane, which had nice air conditioning might I add, to 120 degree desert temperatures was our first rude awaking and we were to find out it only got worse. Logistics were damn near obsolete. What we had as a unit was what we moved forward with. U.S. bases were built by military engineer companies using bulldozers to build up walls around the camps. Thousands of service-members lived in these areas of operations for months, even years.

Once the camp was up and ready, engineers would use bulldozers to create burn pits since there were no incinerators to get rid of the waste. These burn pits would sometimes be made just a hundred yards from the camp. Burn pits were used to discard the camp's trash, which consisted of plastics, used medical equipment, electronics, human waste, metals, batteries, tires etc. The pits were set ablaze with jet fuel or JP8. I remember being on the trash detail a few times where we'd collect the trash around the camp. We'd drive outside the camp about 100 yards away and throw the bags in the pit, sometimes getting in the pit and setting it on fire all while it was smoldering with dark smoke. For us on those details we never thought much of it as it was a part of our duties and a greater mission of winning a war.

Over the recent years, burn pits have become a topic of conversation in the media. In 2004 veterans were returning home from deployments and started to develop unexplained symptoms related to respiratory, cardiovascular, advanced cancers, neurological and insomnia. Veterans turned to the Veterans Administration for answers but since research on burn pits have yet to be conducted to proper treat, mitigate and rehabilitate, the VA didn't have the answer or treatment recommendations for many of these veterans. VA leadership, in an attempt to better understand possible long term health effects from exposure to burn pit smoke, requested in November 2009 that the National Academy of Sciences' Institute of Medicine (IOM) conduct a study to determine the long term health effects from burn pit smoke exposure in Iraq and Afghanistan. Unfortunately in 2011 when the report was released, even now findings included bases in Iraq and Afghanistan did have exposure to burn pit smoke and there was some connection to lung function impairment, research had not indicated that there are long term adverse health effects to open air burn pits. IOM concluded that the pollutant levels at military bases were not higher than levels measured at other polluted sites worldwide.

Since 2011 the IOM release, VA created a burn pit registry for veterans to gather its own data on areas of operation, types of burn pits and symptomology veterans are having compared with those who were also deployed but not around burn pits. The American Legion has a resolution that passed National Convention in 2016: resolution number 118 Environmental Exposures. This resolution coincides with supporting S. 2679 Helping Veterans Exposed to Burn Pits Act. This bill was co-authored by Senator Klobuchar in 2014 and has yet to be voted in and passed. The position of The American Legion and the Bill would allow Congress to fully fund the VA to create a center of excellence in the prevention, diagnosis, mitigation, treatment and rehabilitation of health conditions relating to exposure to burn pits. Could Burn Pits be the new Agent Orange for this era of veterans? VA has a long way to go to confirm health effects, educate their doctors to screen, treat, mitigate and rehabilitate then maybe the Veterans Benefits Administration will look at possible presumptive conditions.

For information on the VA Burn Pit Registry: <https://veteran.mobilehealth.va.gov/AHBurnPitRegistry/#page/home>.

For more information about burn pits or any veterans health issues, contact Wolfsteller at jwolfsteller@mnlegion.org. A KARE-11 news feature on burn pits, including an interview with Wolfsteller is planned in the near future.

Black new St. Cloud director

Stephen D. Black has been appointed the new director of the St. Cloud VA Health System by the Department of Veterans Affairs. He replaces Barry Bahl, who retired this past year.

Black previously was the acting director at the Hampton VA Medical Center in Virginia. He has a masters in science from the University of Indianapolis.

Membership Chart

As of March 22, 2017

District	2017 Goal	Total 2016	Total 2017	Percent of Goal	Same Date '16
1	9,380	9,322	8,627	91.97	9,094
2	7,572	7,488	7,078	93.48	7,310
3	11,977	11,912	11,275	94.14	11,600
4	2,592	2,572	2,289	88.31	2,400
5	2,679	2,657	2,349	87.68	2,577
6	12,109	12,038	11,431	94.40	11,721
7	6,695	6,619	6,155	91.93	6,489
8	4,417	4,377	4,083	92.44	4,214
9	7,015	6,950	6,490	92.52	6,769
10	10,611	10,557	9,664	91.08	10,252
At-large	1,953	2,710	2,273	116.39	2,612
Totals	77,000	77,202	71,714	93.14	75,068

VETS ON THE HILL



Legion members talk it over during the annual Veterans on the Hill Day at the Capitol. The event drew a full house to the Capitol Rotunda.

Continued from Page 1

Rep. Bob Dettmer, R-Forest Lake, chair of the House Veterans Committee, said veterans should speak with one voice.

Dettmer pointed out that there will be a new Medal of Honor memorial on the Capital Mall near the Veterans Service Building.

Dettmer also urged the veterans, who filled both the second and third tiers of the Rotunda, to find younger veterans for the Legion and VFW, and to even pay their dues for the first year if need be.

When the program concluded, veterans headed to their elected lawmaker's offices to talk about veterans issues.

There are dozens of bills working their way through the House and Senate. The session is due to end on May 22.

Of most interest to The American Legion this year is a bill that would provide \$222,000 for renovating the dining hall and kitchen at Legionville Safety Patrol Camp near Brainerd.

The Legionville grant is part of a larger bill that would also provide \$278,000 for a new building at the Veterans Rest Camp near Marine on St. Croix.

The money would come from the Legacy Fund. The measure has passed both the House and Senate veterans committees and the Legacy committee. It must still be approved on the floor of the legislative bodies.

A Senate veterans appropriations bill has been referred to the Finance Committee after being approved by the Veterans Committee. The bill is the omnibus military, veterans and policy bill and should include all veterans spend-

ing measures working their way through the Senate this year. A House companion bill has also been sent to the finance committee.

In the Senate version, \$19.6 million is being requested for the Department of Military Affairs and \$74 million for the Department of Veterans Affairs. In the MDVA portion, \$353,000 is being asked for the veterans service organizations, including the American Legion.

Interestingly enough, the bill contains three appropriations that did not come through the veterans organizations. A total of \$25,000 is requested for Veterans Voices a project of the Minnesota Public Education Radio Stations to help educate the public on veterans contributions; \$90,000 to Veterans Journey Home for new or rehabbed housing for veterans; and \$90,000 for the Veterans Defense Project, which would assist veterans with legal problems.

- Other requests for funding in the bill include:
- \$750,000 to the Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans.
 - \$200,000 for honor guards who serve at funerals.
 - \$100,000 for administering the program for Gold Star families.
 - \$1.1 million for the County Veteran Service Officers.
 - \$57 million for the state veterans homes.

Bills have also been introduced that would ease the tax burden on posts with charitable gambling, and to reduce taxes on post homes.

There is also a bill that would exclude all military retirement pay from state income taxes.



The Fourth District was well represented at the Capitol.



Rep. Kurt Daudt
House Majority Leader



Sen. Bruce Anderson
Senate Veterans Chair



Auxiliary President Carol Kottom studied her notes.



Department Commander Denise Milton was the emcee for the event.



Rep. Bob Dettmer,
House Veterans Chair

WORLD WAR II EXHIBIT AT MNHS



Woodrow Wilson was the president who first kept America out of the war, and then helped bring the nation into the war. Shown are his top hat, cane and spectacles.



People could save in this General Pershing bank.

A World War I Exhibit opens April 8 at the Minnesota History Center in St. Paul. These photos were taken while the exhibit was being set up. Artifacts have been collected from across America on the Great War.



The sinking of the Lusitania, a British ship, brought the U.S. closer to war in 1915 since many Americans were on board. This is a deck chair from the ship.

The ball turret gunner



Thirty-five times Jim Kangas had to stuff his five-foot, six-inch frame into the small confines of a lower ball turret on a B-17 Flying Fortress. Only once did he have to bail out.

Jim Kangas had a bird's-eye view of the war in Europe during World War II.

He would squeeze his five-foot six-inch, 138-pound frame into the lower ball turret on a B-17 bomber and watch the war through the Plexiglas window that separated him from the freezing air.

It was a cat-bird seat of high quality.

There was only one problem. The 35 times he flew as the turret gunner were terrifying.

When he completed his final mission, he was offered the choice of returning to the United States on an airplane or a liberty ship.

I chose the ship. I figured I'd used up all my luck on airplanes."

James Kermit Kangas was born and raised on a 40-acre farm near Kingston, Minnesota, about 50 miles west of the Twins Cities.

We had cows and chickens and there was plenty of work for everyone."

There were seven boys and three girls in the family. Kangas' father let the family run the small farm during the Depression while he made a living as a trucker.

Kangas went to Litchfield High School for two years, and then the family moved to Detroit. The war had started and the war industries were building up, so my father went where the work was."

For the young lad, moving from the farm to the inner city of Detroit was something of a culture shock. I'd never even seen a black person before. The high school I went to was more than half black. But it was no real problem. I made a couple of pretty good friends."

But there were other adjustments. Even the streetcar was foreign to me. And I had to take a bus to school, and here I am, a country kid, on this bus full of people. I had no idea when to get off, so I just got off when everybody else did."

He tried, along with a friend, to enlist in the Navy when he was underage, but while his friend's parents signed the waiver, his father would not. He told me, 'I've already got four boys in the military, and you're not going in until they drag you in.'"

Kangas graduated from Detroit's Pershing High School in 1943, and waited for the draft. He father still would not allow him to volunteer. In October, he got his greetings from Uncle Sam.

He volunteered for the Army Air Corps and was chosen for flight officer training. After six months at a Galesburg, Ill., college, the Army washed out the entire class. At that point of the war, they needed crew members on aircraft, not pilots or navigators.

Kangas found himself, along with his classmates, at Kingman, Arizona, at an army gunnery school. After a few months, the Army deemed the gunners ready, and sent them off to join air crews. If you could pull a trigger, you were ready."

The gunners were sent to Drew Field in Tampa, Florida, where crews for B-17 Flying Fortress bombers were being assembled. He was assigned to the 546th Bomb Squad of the 384th Bomb Group.

Why was he chosen to be a ball turret gunner?

Size was vital. But even for a person my size, it was

crowded in that turret. I had a bit of claustrophobia, so it took a while to get used to it, but I did. After a while I felt like it was my space, and I felt comfortable and secure and in control."

The B-17, a four-engine bomber, had a crew of ten including four officers and six crewmen. The new crew practiced for a while, and then headed for Europe in November of 1944. Kangas quickly picked up two nicknames, "Burrhead" because of his hair and "Shortround" because of his stature.

We went by way of Goose Bay and Iceland. Each plane flew individually, although there were other planes in the area.

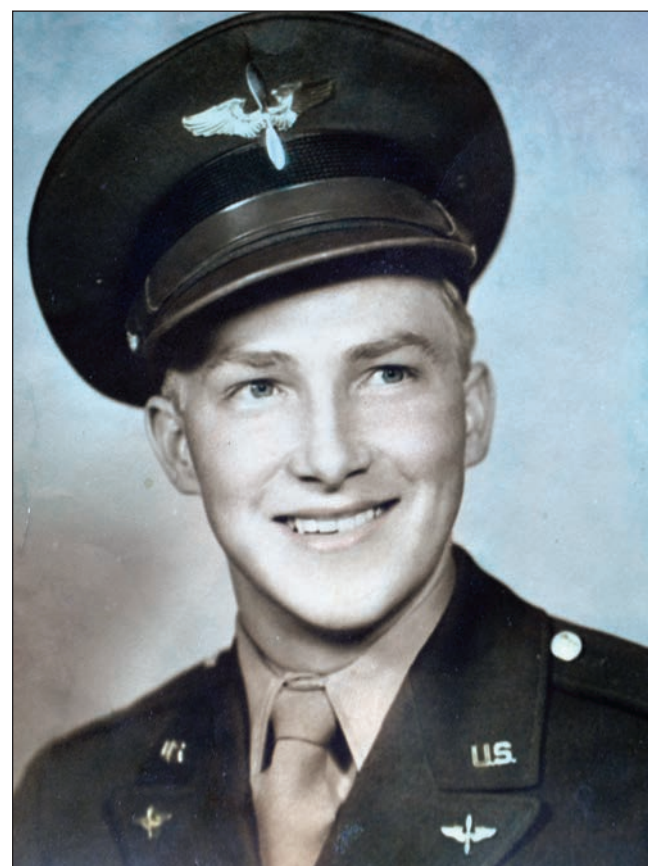
When we got to Goose Bay, I saw this guy all sweated up with a towel. I'm Finnish and so I knew he had to be coming out of the sauna, so I asked him where the sauna was. It turned out it was for officer's only, but he invited me to take a sauna so I did. It turned out he was the commander of the base."

But on the trip, he and another young crewman were assigned to guard the plane all night while others sampled the local culture. All we got was a sleeping bag, and we froze our buns off. We didn't think that was fair, but we were the youngest guys."

In Iceland, after sleeping in a barracks, a truck picked up the crewmen to take them to their plane for the next leg, but the truck driver dropped them in the wrong place.



JIM KANGAS
At home in Columbia Heights



JIM KANGAS
During World War II