



# Legionnaire

Volume 99, Number 5

For God and Country

May 2017

## Veteran's Choice Act extended by Congress

By Al Zdon

The controversial Veterans Choice Act, which was due to expire on August 1, was extended until January by Congress and the measure was signed by President Trump in April.

The act, which was passed three years ago, was meant as a fix for the problems the VA was facing in 2014 when a scandal rocked the agency and resulted in the resignation of then Director Eric Shinseki.

The act allows veterans who live more than 40 miles from a VA facility, or who have been waiting for an appointment more than 30 days, to seek care from private providers and then bill the VA.

The extension had no official reaction from the national American Legion. The measure in the past has been seen by some as part of a continued effort to create a voucher system or to privatize the VA medical system, which The

American Legion opposes.

However, the Legion has supported Choice as a temporary solution to the problems, including long waiting lists, the VA faces.

The act also has been controversial because it hasn't worked as planned. The program was implemented quickly by Congress, and huge problems immediately arose with the contractors who were hired to make the program work.

"In the three years the program has been in effect, it's gotten better, but there still are problems," Patrick Kelly, director of the Minneapolis VA Medical Center, said in an interview.

Kelly said two major problems are in getting appointments for veterans in places where they live, and in getting enough providers.

The program is administered by a third party. In Minnesota, that contractor is the national corporation,

Health Net.

"The veterans who are used to it have gotten to where they can navigate Veterans Choice quite well. Those who are not used to it, there's still problems."

In Minnesota, several providers have dropped out of the program altogether including the Mayo Clinic which serves many veterans, particularly in southern Minnesota. Providers have opted out because of the paperwork difficulty and the slow payment of medical bills.

"Without the Mayo Clinic, we are really limited," Kelly said. "They are not the only one, but their decision has caused us the most pain."

Sen. Jon Tester, D-Mont., was the sponsor on the Senate side of the extension, and he told National Public Radio that Congress still must deal with bigger reforms. Tester said that the VA has seven or eight ways of purchasing care from

**Continued on Page 6**



**STRIKE UP THE BAND** -- When delegates arrived in Minneapolis for the first Legion convention in 1919 they were greeted by a rousing band concert.

### Centennial donations on the rise

Fundraising for the 2018 National Convention in Minneapolis is picking up steam.

Posts have contributed a total of \$15,110 to Fund 99, the 100th Anniversary fund, recently, and Davy and Associates have reported a \$10,000 donor to the Convention Corporation.

"We are about 16 months from the convention," Convention Corporation Chairman Jeff Olson said. "People are

beginning to get excited, advertisers and potential sponsors are getting more interested in supporting the 100th Convention of The American Legion."

There are two ways to contribute to the Centennial celebration.

Posts or individuals can contribute to Fund 99, part of the Minnesota American Legion Foundation. Gambling funds are accepted. The money will be used for edu-

**Continued on Page 2**

### Maybe it's time to check out that box of veteran's stuff

In many homes in Minnesota and in America, there's a box that has been tucked away for years in a closet, a basement, or an attic.

That box might contain documents, uniforms, pictures and other memorabilia about a veteran who died, often in action, during a war. It's likely nobody has looked in that box for years.

Author Greg Jones and others at the April World War II Round Table encouraged people to dig into that box and dig into the life of the departed veteran. It will be a worthwhile experience.

It all began for Jones with a picture that his mother kept on her dresser of her brother L.H. White who had been killed in action when his B-24 bomber crashed in Austria in 1944. "It was a sacred item for her."

The box in the closet contained information about White, and Jones committed himself to finding out more. He learned that before the war, White had been an exercise trainer for horses at tracks around the country, and that he had

been tending bar in Michigan before he enlisted in the Army in February of 1942, just after Pearl Harbor.

The box contained the letters from the government, first saying that he was missing in action, and then confirming that he had been killed. It contained the final letters to White from the young man's father, returned undelivered to the family.

As Jones learned more,

he increased his effort. "It became my mission to find out the fate of those men who were on that plane."

The nine men in the crew on that day were flying "Jerk's Natural," a storied B-24 bomber during the war. The plane later was sold as a plastic model by Revell for many years. It was named after a pilot, Jack Jerstad, and because the tail fin number was

**Continued on Page 13**



**TRACK DOWN THOSE STORIES** -- Author Greg Jones told the World War II Round Table in April about how he did research on his uncle, starting with a box of memorabilia found in a closet.

### Twins Day May 19

Tickets are still available for the 17th annual American Legion Family Day at the Twins which 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 1-800-33-TWINS and hit "O" to speak to an attendant. At the start of your call, reference the special Legion promotion.

Credit cards are accepted, and there will be a \$5 service charge on each order. Tickets will be mailed. Call Nick Corcoran at 612-659-4083 for information or to order for a large group.

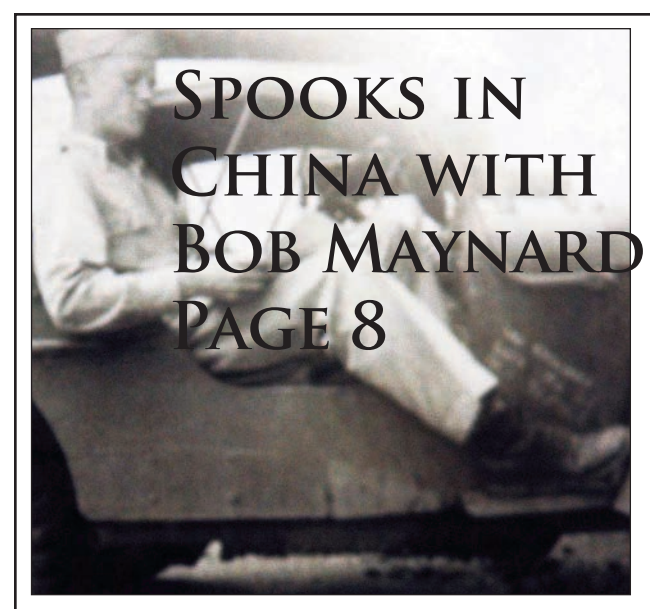
### Convention slated for Mahnommen

Northwestern Minnesota will once again be the destination for this year's Legion and Auxiliary state convention-goers.

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

**Continued on Page 2**



# Donations to 2018 national convention in Minneapolis picking up

Continued from Page 1

convention expenses having to do with the 2018 convention, or for Legion programs into the next century.

Corporations, posts, individuals and others can contribute to the Convention Corporation where money can be spent on promoting and programming for the convention. Gambling money cannot be used for this purpose.

In both cases, the donation can be considered tax deductible.

The Convention Corporation, chaired by Jeff Olson, has discussed a number of potential plans and activities for the convention, which will be the 100th national convention of The American Legion. The convention, in August 2018, will kick off a year of celebration by the national organization culminating in the 2019 convention in Indianapolis marking the 100th birthday of the veterans organization.

Some of those Minnesota activities include:

— Paying for the shuttle bus system that transports our attendees from their hotels to the convention center and back.

— Posters with a World War I theme that will be distributed to all posts in Minnesota in the coming months.

— Ribbons for flag staffs marking the 100th national convention.

— Souvenir metal badges for everyone attending the convention.

— World War I re-enactors that will be present before

and during the convention.

— Display cases showing off some of Minnesota's history for the 10,000 delegates expected to attend the convention.

— Partnerships with Minnesota corporations to provide state-made gifts for convention-goers.

The three largest post donations came from North St. Paul (\$5,000), Osseo (\$5,000) and St. Louis Park (\$2,000). The first project from the donations will be the posters that can be displayed at every post and at other locations.

The flag ribbons will be distributed through the department vice commanders. They will cost \$20 each. More information will be available soon.

Olson noted that the 2018 convention will follow the Super Bowl in Minneapolis by about seven months. "It is great following the Super Bowl. Every hotel we have in our

block has recently done extensive upgrades and I believe Minneapolis will have one of the finest room blocks ever."

## Convention plans

Continued from Page 1

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.

Bill Eck, convention chairman for host Mahnomens Post 31, said there will a lunch at the post on Thursday and Friday, and that Ronnie Cash will perform on Thursday.

**Purchase a "Support Our Troops" Plate.**  
Call: 651-4TROOPS  
Visit: [www.minnesotaveteran.org](http://www.minnesotaveteran.org)

### ANXIETY, PTSD, DEPRESSION RELATED TO MILITARY SERVICE

Former VA Decision Review Officer,  
VA Disability Appeals Agent,  
Accredited Appeals Agent since 2010  
Specializes in Mental Health Compensation

**JON BROWN**  
952-201-1799  
[www.VetsTBI.com](http://www.VetsTBI.com)  
JonBrownAppeals@gmail.com

## Purple Cross

### Funeral Plans for Veterans

Purple Cross has been serving America's Veterans since 1948 and continues to offer the best funeral plans available. With **Funeral Preplanning** you:

- Protect your burial funds from nursing home expenses
- Protect your family from financial burden in time of grief
- Gain peace of mind knowing your funeral is taken care of

**Yes, I would like to know more about:**

Traditional Funeral Cost    Cremation Cost  
 Payment Plan Options    Discount Plans

For a free **Funeral Preplanning Cost Estimate**, please return this coupon to Purple Cross, 15116 Manitou Rd NE, Prior Lake, MN 55372 or call Jerry Albrecht at 952-226-6393. **Absolutely no obligation!**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City/State: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Birth Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Veterans Linkage Line

[minnesotaveteran.org](http://minnesotaveteran.org) | 1-888-LinkVet (546-5838)

### Help for veterans and families

**Attention Veterans!**  
This is your northern Minnesota resort. Barrier-free and open 12 months a year. Gateway to the BWCA.  
800-777-7538  
email: [vetslake@frontiernet.net](mailto:vetslake@frontiernet.net)  
[www.veteransonthelakeresort.org](http://www.veteransonthelakeresort.org)  
All cabins have a lake view.

## VETERANS on the LAKE RESORT

Ely, Minnesota

RESORT FOR DISABLED VETERANS, ACTIVE DUTY AND ABLE BODIED VETERANS, DISABLED GENERAL PUBLIC AND FAMILIES.

### 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.**

## "FOR THE AMERICAN LEGION, I WILL."

Minneapolis is hosting the 100th national convention in 2018. Our great state was the site of the 1st convention and will now host this historic event. The National Convention Corporation of Minnesota is inviting all Legionnaires and posts to say "For The American Legion, I Will!" and contribute towards our **Beginning the Second Century of Service** Campaign. Gifts can be directed towards Minnesota's hosting responsibilities for the convention or The American Legion Minnesota Foundation to support programming throughout our state. For more information, please visit [www.mnlegion.org](http://www.mnlegion.org) and click on 100th National Convention Information.

### DO YOU KNOW OF A COMPANY THAT MAY FINANCIALLY SUPPORT THE 100TH CONVENTION THROUGH SPONSORSHIP, ADVERTISING OR GIVING?

There are sponsorship, advertisement and giving opportunities for businesses. If you know of a company that may want to take part in the 100th convention, please contact Michael Davy at (612) 247-9960 or [mdavy@mnlegion.org](mailto:mdavy@mnlegion.org).

#### National Convention Corporation of Minnesota

**CHAIR**  
Jeff Olson

**HONORARY CHAIRS**  
Bud Grant | Senator Bob Lessard | Brigadier General Dennis Lord | Brigadier General Curtis Norenberg | Brigadier General Dennis Schulstad | Major General Larry Shellito

**COMMITTEE**  
Mike & Teresa Ash | Roger Ball | Joe Bayer | Jim Copher | Ray Dezurik | Bill Goede | Tom Lannon | Dan Ludwig | Lynne Nottage | Roger Olson | Robin Picray | Marland Ronning | Larry Ryan | Tom Schottenbauer | Donald Schroedl | Randy Tesdahl | Don Walser | Dan Williams

# Director of Selective Service pays visit to Minnesota

It has at times been the most hated government agency in America, and it has also been one of the most necessary.

The Selective Service System, also known as the draft board, has provided the nation with military personnel from the Civil War to World War I, World War II, the Korean War and the Vietnam War.

The leader of that organization was in Minnesota recently to help deliver a large bowl to the Minnesota History Center.

Adam Copp, the interim director of the U.S. Selective Service System, brought the bowl that was actually used for the draft lottery during World War I. The bowl will be part of the new World War I Exhibit which opened at the history center in April.

"The Selective Service came back from cold storage in 1980," Copp said in an interview. "It had been ended during the Vietnam War in 1973."

Every male citizen of the United States from age 18-25 is required to register with his local draft board. It is a legal requirement.

While there has not been a draft since the Vietnam War, the government is still interested in staying ready if the nation needs manpower.

The penalty in federal law for deliberately not registering is a \$250,000 fine and/or five years in jail. In actuality, the names of those who don't register are turned over to the Justice Department, but no action is taken.

The real penalty could be that a person who did not register may be turned away later from certain federal benefits.

Copp outlined the history of the agency, from its start in the Civil War. "It was not a fair or equitable process in the Civil War, but both the North and South had drafts."

It was possible in those days to buy your way out of the draft or find a substitute.

During the war, there were terrible draft

riots in New York, Detroit and other northern cities. The First Minnesota Regiment spent some of its final days of duty in New York City to police the draft riots.

Since then, Copp said, the government has endeavored to make the process fair for all. The draft that was developed in World War I with a lottery process has been a model for all other wars, he said. The Selective Service System as we know it was created in May 1917.

The agency has 124 full-time employees, he said. About half take care of running the office, and the other half manage the data.

The system for the most part relies on 11,000 local draft boards across the country. These boards are responsible for registering young men, and also make decisions on such things as conscientious objector status.

"If someone has a moral objection to serving, they must be treated fairly. All citizens have their rights," Copp said.

The system registers about 91 percent of those eligible. "Some people just fall off the map. They don't get a driver's license or they don't live in the country."

In Minnesota, any man over 18 who tries to get a driver's license will have to sign a consent form that will automatically register him with the SSS.

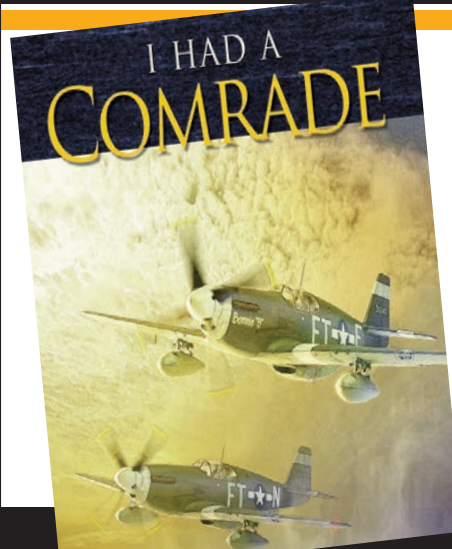
"We like to look at it as it's your duty as a citizen to step up and register," he said.

The government, Copp said, is presently looking at other issues regarding the draft process, including the question of whether women should also be required to register.

Copp, a retired Marine officer, said the agency has data on 17 million young men between 18 and 36, and on 80 million men in total. That information is not shared outside the agency.



**GREETINGS** -- Interim Selective Service System Director Adam Copp was in Minnesota recently delivering a historical artifact to the Minnesota History Center. He is flanked by Department Commander Denise Milton and Minnesota Selective Service Director Bill Barbknecht. "The Selective Service System has always had a close relationship with The American Legion," Copp said. "They have also been very supportive."



**WE ARE VETERANS  
WE ARE COMRADES**

READ *I HAD A COMRADE*,  
A NEW BOOK BY MINNESOTA  
AUTHOR, PAUL SAILER

ORDER AT  
[WWW.LODENBOOKS.COM](http://WWW.LODENBOOKS.COM)  
AND  
RECEIVE FREE SHIPPING  
THROUGH FATHER'S DAY OR  
PURCHASE A COPY AT THE  
MINNESOTA HISTORY CENTER  
MUSEUM STORE, ST. PAUL

[WWW.LODENBOOKS.COM](http://WWW.LODENBOOKS.COM)

## MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

JOIN. MEMBERS GET THE BEST DEAL IN HISTORY.

# 5 FANTASTIC WAYS TO EXPERIENCE MNHHS



**1 FUND THE FORT**  
Ask your state legislators to support funding for Historic Fort Snelling and thank Gov. Dayton for his support at [mnhs.org/HFS2020](http://mnhs.org/HFS2020).



**POWOW WITH COMMUNITY**  
Come to the Memorial Day Powwow, an event to honor veterans, on Mon., May 29. Mille Lacs Indian Museum and Trading Post, Onamia.



**EXPLORE WWI AMERICA**  
See rare artifacts and encounter the extraordinary people and nation-shaking movements that shaped our nation at *WWI America*, now on view. Minnesota History Center, St. Paul.

**2 VISIT FOR FREE**  
On Memorial Day, May 29, active military and veterans receive FREE admission to Historic Fort Snelling, which will feature a "living timeline" of America's military past.

**GET A DONUT!**  
Pick up your free donut from 7-10 am on June 2 (while supplies last), with admission to *WWI America*. Enjoy the exhibit and storytelling about WWI, reenactors, and music. **National Donut Day**, Fri., June 2, Minnesota History Center, St. Paul.



PLAN YOUR VISIT OR PURCHASE ONLINE • [MNHS.ORG](http://MNHS.ORG) • 1-844-MNSTORY

MNHHS Premier Partners: Xcel Energy, EXPLORE MINNESOTA

## COMMANDER'S COLUMN

By Denise Milton



Greetings Fellow Legionnaires.

Our last formal rally is over, but we still need to continue working membership. I want to take this opportunity to thank everyone for working so hard to obtain the 95% target goal. We were so close-94.46%. We can still do it. Now we need to roll up our sleeves and make that extra effort to reach 100%. Just ask. Get those renewals and a few new members wouldn't hurt either. Remember that Department Membership Director Mark is offering every post a \$3 bonus for every new member that is signed up by the 10th of May.

A big shout out to the 6th District Commander Veronica and Membership Director Judy as well as 3rd District Commander Mike and Membership Director Eugene for attaining the 95% goal by the deadline. Congratulations on a job well done.

The District conventions have all been scheduled for the coming weeks, please take the time to attend yours this year. It is an excellent opportunity to meet members of others posts in your district. Don't forget to bring someone along that has never been to one. I always come away with

# Editorial

## Chance for lawmakers

Back at the Veterans Day on the Hill gathering at the Capitol, a series of legislators urged veterans to stay involved in the process.

Well, there's still time for the Minnesota Legislature to get it right on a couple of bills. And it's time to speak up and be in the heart of that process.

Both bills are concerned with safety -- one for our youth and one for our veterans.

In Minneapolis, the Minnesota Veterans Home has just one access road leading in and out. Yes, we know that sounds too farfetched to be true. A facility that serves hundreds of veterans has just one road for ambulances, fire trucks, or evacuation. If that road is blocked? It's a disaster waiting to happen.

There used to be two roads leading into the veterans home, but because of safety reasons, a bridge over Minnehaha Creek has been closed. It will take upwards of \$700,000 to fix the bridge and open up the second access to the facility, but it's an expense that must be borne.

Somehow, though, the bridge project has had trouble getting traction in the Minnesota Legislature. In the House, the bill has been referred to the Veterans Affairs Division in February, and there it sits. In the Senate, the bill has been referred to the Capital Investment Committee on March 1 and nothing has happened since.

If there's been other movement with these bills, we do

## Mail Call

### You're worth it

To the Editor:

How many times in the past few years have strangers come up to a veteran saying, "Thank you for your service." The vet is probably wearing a ball cap or t-shirt with their military branch printed. They both just smile and carry on.

Try this: "You're worth it." The stranger will smile, be pleased as Punch and be amazed. Try it, it works everytime with everyone, young, vets and the elderly.

And it's good PR for the vets as well.

Wes Moreland  
Pine Island

### Honor the flag

To the Editor:

I think it is very important that our flag and national anthem are presented at all events. I know all color guards don't perform like practicing drill teams. I belong to the VFW and The American Legion drill teams and we try to get procedures right. Fans, especially youngsters, attending these events see where the flags are when presented.

In the March issue of the Legionnaire, you have a picture of the American flag being presented at a Timberwolves game. All three flags are in the wrong position to be presented. I think we should at least have the flags in the right place when people see, like I said especially youngsters, the colors presented.

Gene Kauppila  
Thief River Falls

new ideas and can't wait to get back to my home post to share with my post members. Throughout my travels this past year visiting posts, I find that I learn something new and different almost every time. Each post has their own distinct traditions that make them unique yet we have a common bond-we are all veterans still serving.

I know, I know- I talk about Consolidated Post Reports (CPR) almost every month but there is a reason-this is one of the most important reports you will complete and turn in. The American Legion uses it to show our progress as an organization. It's not only used by the National organization to report to Congress on what we do but it can serve as an excellent recruiting tool when talking to prospective members. You can also place in your local newspaper to let the community know what you do.

I attended my very first Department Oratorical contest and what an experience. What a great group of contestants-well prepared and well versed on the Constitution and Amendments. I was amazed how they all stayed within the time restrictions required. They were all good and I found it difficult to decide who should win. Glad it wasn't me judging. They are all winners in my eyes. We will soon know who wins at the National competitions, can't wait.

A big thank you to all the posts for the great hospitality shown my husband and I over the past two months as we celebrated the Legion's Birthday. I can't tell you how enjoyable it has been. However the weight I've managed to put on over the past several months isn't what I had in mind. The food is too good. Thank you again.

Please remember our servicemembers and their families. If you know someone personally reach out and assist them if needed or to just let them know you are there if needed. A special prayer for those that continue to suffer the inner demons of PTSD or contemplating that life is too difficult-let them know they aren't alone in their fight!

For God and Country.

not know that. All we or any other citizen can do is look them up on the Bill Tracker website.

The other bill would provide \$222,000 for improvements at Legionville, particularly in updating the dining hall -- a remodeling that is crucially needed to better serve the children who learn school safety patrol at the camp.

The other half of the bill would provide \$278,000 for a new building at the Veterans Rest Camp at Big Marine Lake -- also a worthwhile and needed project. The Legion and the Rest Camp were encouraged to submit the requests together in one bill and to speak with one voice.

The House and Senate versions both were approved and sent to the Legacy Committee where they would be funded. But a funny thing happened in the House version, the Legionville funding was cut while the Rest Camp moved on to the conference committee. As of this writing, the Legionville project is still in the Senate version.

So there is hope, both for the bridge at the veterans home and for the Legionville project. But we are fast approaching the time when the lawmakers enter into that shadowland of passing legislation, where democracy takes a back seat to bargaining skills.

We urge all veterans to support these two bills. The bridge bills are SF 1602 and HF 1092. The Legionville bills are HF 232 and SF 135.

Let your legislator know how you feel about these and other bills important to veterans.

## Hard work by veteran pays off in Maryland

Over the course of four years, Legionnaire William "Sarge" Garlitz made what he thinks is around 15 trips back and forth from his home in Ocean City, Md., to Annapolis - roughly 116 miles each way. The reason: to urge the Maryland General Assembly to pass legislation that would fly the POW-MIA flag above the Maryland State House and all other state buildings, with a few minor exceptions, that fly the U.S. flag.

Recently, Garlitz saw his efforts pay off. Maryland Gov. Larry Hogan signed into law legislation that will do just what the Synepuxent Post 166 Legionnaire has been seeking for so many years.

"(The POW-MIA flag) flies over the White House six times a year, and it's the only flag that's ever flown over the White House other than the American flag," said Garlitz, a former post commander and 51-year Legionnaire. "I just thought that this flag should be flown here so that Maryland wants to send a message that we're not going to forget the unaccounted (servicemembers)."

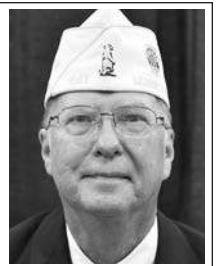
For years the proposed state legislation remained stuck in committee. "Once I get my teeth into something, I don't give up," Garlitz said.

Finding out the legislation passed unanimously in both chambers was special for Garlitz.

"It was your mind being at ease and saying 'mission accomplished.'"

## Chaplain's Corner

By  
Bill Brockberg



### Drive on with Spiritual Experience

On my way home from a Training Conference in Mankato I stopped to buy gas and a soft drink before I resumed my drive home. As I traveled through this small town, I saw a flashing neon reader-board sign in front of a hardware store. The messages were as follows: Thursday, April 6, 2017, 2:30 pm; 52 degrees F, Sunny, no chance of rain; Snow Blowers, 50 percent off!

I didn't notice any customers in front of that store, beating down the doors to snatch up a discounted snow blower. I didn't stop either. I was focused on getting home, unpacking and making plans for the weekend. With the warm air and bright sunshine, snow drifts were the furthest thing from my mind. At my office that Monday and after the weather had taken a sharp turn to cold and freezing rainy weather, a fellow employee remarked to me that it was four years ago today that Worthington got that crazy ice storm that knocked the power out for three days; in some places for six days and caused lots of damage.

I remembered that ice storm and my first summer living in Worthington three months after that storm. One hot, humid summer day and snow blowers were on sale at a hardware store. I didn't stop that time either and my first full winter in Worthington made me pay.

This then made me wonder how many times we are quick to disregard the good news that God holds in front of us day after day, because we are focused on our present circumstances. There isn't a day of your life that God isn't offering these things: forgiveness of all your sins, healing for all the wounds in your soul, deliverance from all your bondages and addictions, a minute-by-minute experience of his love and compassion in an impersonal world, a life of complete satisfaction and finally, renewed strength to help you take another step through hard times.

See Psalm 103 below.

One day soon, I may well be pulling the cord to crank up my expensive snow blower I waited to buy in February of 2014. I wished I had been a little more thoughtful about the snow blower the summer before and I was reminded of my carelessness a handful of times when I was bent over my shovel in a three-foot snow drift in my double-wide driveway. Don't let that be your spiritual experience. Jesus died and rose again because he wants you to have a brand new beginning. It may well be that you've been driving by God's offer because you're too busy or too preoccupied. That isn't smart. God longs for you to have joy and peace, freedom and hope at this minute and for eternity...and they won't cost you a penny. Those gifts are never out of season, and you won't find them any other place but in God's presence. God knows the road you are on and He knows exactly what you need for the rest of the journey. Be honest with God. Tell him everything that is in your heart. Jesus is waiting to lead you the rest of the way. Don't drive by.

"Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Forget not all his benefits. Who forgives all thine iniquities; who heals all thy diseases; who redeemed thine life from destruction; who crowned thee with loving kindness and tender mercies; who satisfied thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's. The Lord executed righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed." Psalm 103, verses 1 - 6.

# The Minnesota Legionnaire

Official Publication of and Owned Exclusively by  
The American Legion, Department of Minnesota

Al Zdon, Editor

First published in 1920 as the Hennepin County Legionnaire, the Minnesota Legionnaire is now in its 98th year of publication. It is published monthly by The American Legion, Department of Minnesota, Room 300A, 20 West 12th Street, St. Paul, MN 55155-2000. Periodicals postage is paid at St. Paul, MN, and at additional mailing offices. The Legionnaire is a member of the Minnesota Newspaper Association and the National American Legion Press Association.

**SUBSCRIPTION:** \$10 for non-members. Members receive the Legionnaire as part of their dues.

**PHONE:** 651-291-1800, 866-259-9163, FAX: 651-291-1057  
**POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to The American Legion, 20 W. 12th Street, St. Paul, MN, 55155-2000. (USPS No. 013-679.) (ISSN No. 1644270)

**ADVERTISING RATES:** Contact Al Zdon, 651-291-1800

**E-MAIL:** azdon@mnlegion.org

**WEBSITE:** www.mnlegion.org

**BOARD OF PUBLICATION MEMBERS:** President Denise Milton, Bagley; Vice President Don Amundson, Blue Earth; Secretary Randy Tesdahl, Elk River; Treasurer, Richard Horn, Melrose. Board Members include: Bob Locker, Fridley; Clinton Burt, Slayton; Joe Bayer, Minneapolis; Pat Logan, Bloomington; Donna Arends, Raymond; Jean Walker, Warren.

# What's Happening

## Women's Conference

The 2017 MDVA Women Veterans Conference will be held Thursday, May 25, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Ramada Plymouth Hotel and Conference Center. All ages, branches and transitioning military women are welcome.

Breakfast will be included. There will be speakers, workshops, displays and benefits assistance. For more information go to [www.minnesotaveteran.org/womenveterans](http://www.minnesotaveteran.org/womenveterans).

## Apple Valley party

Apple Valley Post 1776 will host its annual Kentucky Derby party on May 6 beginning at 11 a.m. It will feature horse races, meat raffles, hat contests, themed drinks, door prizes and more. For more information, call 612-308-3311.

## Victory in Europe

An event honoring Allied veterans will be held Saturday, May 6 at the Minnesota Capitol. The group will assemble on the south Capitol steps at 10:30, march to the World War II Memorial at 11, have a ceremony at 11:15 with closing at 11:45. The event is sponsored by the World War II History Round Table and World War II Russian Veterans Association.

## Round Tables

The St. Croix Valley Civil War Round Table will meet on May 22 for "The Writer: An Artist in Residence at Gettysburg," with Leigh Rydberg. It is a dinner meeting at the Lowell Inn in Stillwater. For more information, call Steve Anderson, 715-386-1268.

The World War II History Round Table will meet Thursday, May 11, at 7 p.m. at the Fort Snelling History Center for "The Final Major Battle in Western Europe" with Hal Winton. Battle of the Bulge veterans will be present. Cost is \$5.

## Red Tail Exhibit

The Commemorative Air Force Red Tail Squadron will present the "Rise Above" traveling exhibit at the Waseca County Free Fair on July 12-16. The mobile exhibit includes a 15-minute movie on the Tuskegee Airmen on a 160 degree panoramic screen. The exhibit will be open noon to 9 p.m. each day.

## Spam Post reaching out

Spam Post 570 in Austin is reaching out for new members. The post, which was founded just after World War II in Austin with women veterans, became one of Minnesota's most noted posts for many years, with the Spam women placing high in the national drum and bugle competition.

The post now has only two members, but is seeking more. For more information, contact Eileen at [visitor@austincvb.com](mailto:visitor@austincvb.com).

## Drop-In Legal Clinics

A series of Drop-In Legal Clinics are slated. The clinics offer veterans counseling on housing, employment, benefits, debt collection, expungement, and family law. For more information, contact Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans, at the numbers listed below. The sessions include:

- Friday, May 26, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., at the Alexandria Armory in Alexandria. 218-722-8763.
- Tuesday, June 6, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Nobles County Government Center, Worthington. 507-345-8258.
- Tuesday, May 16, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., Serviceman's Club, Virginia. 218-722-8763.
- Tuesday, May 9, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., Minneapolis VA Medical Center, Flag Atrium Balcony. 651-200-4750.
- Wednesday, May 17, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., West Duluth American Legion Post 71. 218-722-8763.
- Thursday, May 26, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., VFW Post 612, Fergus Falls. 218-722-8763.

## Town Hall for Veterans

The Minnesota VA will hold a Town Hall meeting on Wednesday, June 21, at the Whipple Federal Building from 5-7 p.m. in the Lower Level Auditorium.

Leaders from the Minneapolis VA Health Care System, the St. Paul Regional Benefits Office and the Fort Snelling National Cemetery will be on hand.

Attendees should arrive early and expect a security check. For more information, call Ralph Heussner at 612-467-3012.

## Camp Ripley Run

A charity motorcycle run to help fund the Disabled Veteran Deer and Turkey hunts will be held July 1. It will go from Jenkins VFW to Camp Ripley.

Registration with coffee and rolls is a 9 a.m., and kickstands up at 11:30 to noon. Donation is \$15 for riders and \$10 for passengers.

There will be a tour of the Minnesota Military Museum at Camp Ripley. For more information, contact Jim Hesselgrave at 612-599-9149 or email: [vfwmn@aol.com](mailto:vfwmn@aol.com).

## Support Troops Golf

The 11th annual Support the Troops Golf Tournament will be held on Saturday, June 17, at the Ponds Golf Course in St. Francis. It is sponsored by the Support the Troops Charity.

It is a scramble format, \$100 per golfer, which includes the round, a cart, dinner and a gift bag. There is a \$10,000 hole in one contest. To register, send your team members' names, phone number and email along with the payment to Rick Hedberg, 6950 Hilledale Rd. NW, Elk River, 55330.

## St. Cloud VA Recovery Night

Recovery Night is scheduled for May 9, from 6 to 7:30 p.m. at the St. Cloud VA Medical Center, Building 8. The night features veterans sharing their stories of hope, success, resilience and recovery.

Veterans and family members are invited to attend. It's a peer-led effort to share success and inspire hope in others.

# Taps

**Norgaard, Thomas T.**, 68, Past Ninth District Commander, died April 6, 2017. He was a veteran of the Vietnam War, and he joined the Army in 1968 and reenlisted in 1974. He served as Ninth District Membership Director and twice was elected District Commander, 2013-14 and 2014-15. He was a member of Fosston Post 114.

**Danielson, Harold**, 99, Army veteran of World War II, died April 12, 2017. He was the last charter member of New London Post 573.

**Bremer, Worrell E.**, 90, Navy veteran of World War II, died April 1, 2017. He was a past commander of Round Lake Post 461.

**Langseth, Lynn K.**, 71, Air Force veteran of the Vietnam War, died April 5, 2017. He was a member of Round Lake Post 461.

**House, Francis W., "Red,"** 87, Air Force veteran of the Korean War, died April 13, 2017. He served stateside. He was a member of Austin Post 91.

**Haus, Charles P.**, 96, Navy veteran of World War II, died April 11, 2017. He was a member of Arlington Post 250.

**Ball, Lloyd E.**, 91, Navy veteran of World War II, died March 26, 2017. He was a member of Albert Lea Post 56.

**Fedor, Lloyd F.**, 82, Army veteran of the Korean War, died March 8, 2017. He was a member of the honor guard at Holdingford Post 211.

**Barkeim, Duane O.**, 76, Navy veteran of the Vietnam War, died March 25, 2017. He was an engineman third class. He was a member of Granite Falls Post 69.

**Roeder, Jerry**, 84, Navy veteran of the Korean War, died March 28, 2017. He was a member of New London Post 537.

**Kuehl, Charles L., "Hans,"** 90, Navy veteran of World War II, died April 1, 2017. He served in the South Pacific. He was a member of Waconia Post 150.

**Grandboise, John M.**, 88, Army veteran of the Korean War, died April 3, 2017. He was a member of East Grand Forks Post 157.

**Sanken, Harold H.**, 98, Army Air Corps veteran of World War II, died March 29, 2017. He served in the Fifth Air Force in the Philippines and Australia. He was a member of Brownton Post 143.

**Becker, Wilfred**, 90, Army veteran of World War II, died March 19, 2017. He was a member of Eden Valley Post 381.

**Gullickson, Larry G.**, 72, Marine Corps veteran of the Vietnam War, died April 4, 2017. He was a member of Austin Post 91.

**Kraeger, Clifford Arthur**, 97, Army veteran of World

War II, died March 29, 2017. He was a member of Zimmerman Post 560.

**Nolan, Denis Darron**, 71, Marine Corps veteran of the Vietnam War, died March 25, 2017. He was a sergeant who served with the 1st Division Headquarters near Da Nang. He was a member of Coon Rapids Post 334.

**Waldorf, Walter**, 88, Army veteran of the Korean War, died March 28, 2017. He was a member of Park Rapids Post 212.

**Kroc, Maurice R., "Bud,"** 95, Army veteran of World War II, died March 5, 2017. He was a member of Austin Post 91.

**Nierengarten, Michael J.**, 92, Army veteran of World War II, died March 23, 2017. He was a member of St. Joseph Post 328.

**Bloom, Donald E.**, 79, Navy veteran of the Korean War, died March 24, 2017. He was a member of Austin Post 91.

**Schoening, Allan M.**, 99, Navy veteran of World War II, died March 24, 2017. He served as a Seabee in Trinidad. He was a member of Alexandria Post 87.

**Sonstebly, Ward C.**, 88, Marine Corps veteran of the Korean War, died March 30, 2017. He was a corporal and spent 13 months in Korea. He was a member of Alexandria Post 87.

**Neese, Kara J.**, 40, Navy veteran of the Persian Gulf wars, died March 20, 2017. She served 20 years. She was a member of Long Prairie Post 12.

**Barsness, Dale Rodger**, 78, Navy veteran of the Vietnam War, died April 4, 2017. He was a member of Paynesville Post 271.

**Niles, Leland E.**, 85, Navy veteran of the Korean War, died April 11, 2017. He was a member of Brainerd Post 255.

**Zitur, Donald C., Sr.**, 92, Army veteran of World War II, died April 12, 2017. He was a member of Brainerd Post 255.

**Handeland, John H.**, 86, Army National Guard and Reserves veteran of the Korean and Vietnam Wars, died March 24, 2017. He served 37 years, and the administration office at Camp Ripley is named for him. He was a member of Brainerd Post 255.

**Stang, Michael G.**, 65, Army Reserves veteran of the Vietnam War, died March 28, 2017. He was a member of New Prague Post 45.

**Mazer, Leo Theodor**, 92, Army veteran of World War II and the Korean and Vietnam Wars, died April 8, 2017. He earned a Purple Heart and Bronze Star. He was a member of Monticello Post 260.

**Forbes, Richard V.**, 92, Navy veteran of World War II,

died April 6, 2017. He was a member of Monticello Post 260.

**Smude, Peter**, 69, Army veteran of the Vietnam War, died March 20, 2017. He was a member of Brainerd Post 255.

**Howe, Neil L.**, 86, Air Force veteran of the Korean War, died April, 2017. He was a member of St. Paul Park Post 98.

**Meyer, Glen**, 88, Army veteran of the Korean War, died April 21, 2017. He was a member of Tyler Post 185.

**McCarthy, Joseph P.**, 90, Navy veteran of World War II, died April 7, 2017. He was a member of Caledonia Post 191.

**Doering, Stanley C.**, 76, Army veteran of the Vietnam War, died April 15, 2017. He was a member of Caledonia Post 191.

**Ryks, Gordon H.**, 87, Army veteran of the Korean War, died March 16, 2017. He was a member of Willmar Post 167.

**Hamann, Milton M.**, 89, Army veteran of the Korean War, died March 20, 2017. He was a member of Willmar Post 167.

**Hoogeveen, Alvin H.**, 92, Army veteran of World War II, died March 30, 2017. He was a member of Willmar Post 167.

**Larson, Conrad E., Dr.**, 87, Army veteran of the Korean War, died March 31, 2017. He was a member of Willmar Post 167.

**Somerville, William R.**, 91, Army veteran of World War II, died April 1, 2017. He was a past commander of Willmar Post 167.

**Zylstra, Gerald**, 95, Navy veteran of World War II, died April 6, 2017. He was a member of Willmar Post 167.

**Wallin, Virgil W.**, 90, Navy veteran of World War II and Army veteran of the Korean War, died April 9, 2017. He was a member of Willmar Post 167.

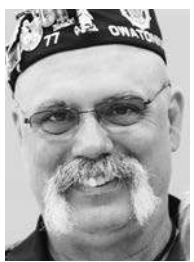
**Westhoff, Harold E.**, 97, Navy veteran of World War II, died April 9, 2017. He was a member of Willmar Post 167.

**Sundberg, Omer L. "Ole,"** 87, Army veteran of the Korean War, died April 18, 2017. He was stationed in Alaska. He was a member of East Grand Forks Post 157.

**Kalinoski, Victor**, 97, Army veteran of World War II, died April 12, 2017. He served in New Zealand, Australia, India and Iran. He was a member of Thief River Falls Post 117.

## American Legion Riders

By Chuck Stone  
Department Director



Greetings American Legion Family, Riding season is officially upon us. The Department Legacy Ride committee is in their final stage of completing this year's run. Hopefully after their next meeting, all of the details will be finalized for both weekends.

I would like to take this opportunity to announce the Department of Minnesota ALR traveling trophy. It is a very nice wooden plaque in the shape of Minnesota with a couple of Honda pistons on it. The rules are simple: Whoever has the trophy must display it prominently in the post bar. 2. Must have three ALR members to steal it. 3. May be stolen between March 1st and October 31st. 4. May not be stolen on days where the post is having an event or ride. 5. If more than one chapter shows up to steal at the same time, the chapter with most riders takes it. In the event of a tie high card wins. 6. Notify when taken: Joe Smillie (641)590-3522 or Roe Naylor (507)438-5804. 7. Once stolen the trophy is safe at your post for 5 days. 8. Trophy can only be claimed when the post is open for business. 9. Each time the trophy is stolen, the chapter stealing it will pay \$10.00. At the end of the year the money will be given to the chapter who stole it the most, to be donated to the charity of their choice. You will be notified at the end of the year how much you owe for stealing the trophy and where to send your fines. 10. Those stealing the trophy must have on their Riders vests and be on bikes, sorry no cages. If you need to locate the whereabouts of the traveling trophy you can call Roe Naylor or Joe Smillie or look on facebook - ALR traveling trophy. This program is intended to get Riders out to visit other posts within Minnesota.

It's hard to believe the Legion year is almost over. I have been to a few testimonial dinners and only have a couple left on the calendar. A question for Commander Denise and her husband Dennis, what is the biggest guy you have had in your little Toyota? I hope everyone is enjoying the wet spring weather. Keep the chrome side up and the rubber side down.

## Legion training session is designed for all Legionnaires

By Jeff Gay

Minnesota American Legion Training is your training. It is scheduled for June and everyone, to include post officers and membership, is encouraged to attend. The training is geared towards helping post's become better at what they do and to improve overall understanding of The American Legion and conducting effective meetings and membership activities.

The event begins the evening of Friday June 23rd with registration and turn-in of District iPads and flag kits. It will also include time for a social gathering and networking as well as an overview of what to expect at the training on Saturday.

Training begins Saturday morning the 24th at The American Legion Post in Brainerd. Noon lunch will be prepared and served at the post and following the training there will be a dinner and social at Legionville.

A short recap and discussion of the training is planned for Sunday morning the 25th. There will be a couple speakers and all District Membership Packets will be distributed along with the iPads for the new District Commanders. It is important that District Commanders be in attendance in order to receive their packets and training for the iPads.

The instruction will cover a myriad of topics all geared to help you host and conduct the best business meetings you can as well as to promote your post. This training will include, but not be limited to, conducting a proper meeting, importance of the annual timeline, preparing news articles, fund raising, recruiting, retention and much more. If you have something specific you would like discussed please let us know.

Seating is limited and getting numbers in advance helps us plan for meals and layout. Please go to the Minnesota Legion website, mnlegion.org, and click on "Minnesota American Legion Training in the News section.

### Contact information:

Training questions: Jeffrey L. Gay, 145 3rd Ave., Jackson, MN, 56143; Phone: (507) 933-4576 or email jlymang@gmail.com. Legionville housing questions and reservations: Roy Kruger, 9544 Legionville Road, Brainerd, MN 56401; Phone: (218) 829-3094.

## Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

By Ron Quade, Director  
American Legion/ MDVA  
Claims Division



### Judge Crowley

Your American Legion Claims Divisions are at the cutting edge of advocacy at a local, state, federal and national level. In previous segments you learned about MDVA and American Legion Claims Division efforts to professionally advocate for our claimants in the Board of Veteran Appeals (BVA) Pre-Hearing Conference pilot (PHC).

This month you will enjoy knowing we have National Federal Partners willing to invest and prove their dedication to serving our Minnesota veterans and their needs.

In October 2015, I was contacted about a potential pilot project in which local Regional Office Power of Attorney (POA) Offices would cooperate with BVA judges to determine cases most easily granted or remanded. This process, the first of its kind, would allow the Claims Division staff, who are most familiar with the claims, to communicate to a BVA judge directly. With PHC cases could be considered for resolution without a year's long

wait for a formal hearing. The Pre-Hearing Conference Pilot was born and our office has had huge success in winning BVA cases by working directly with Judge Crowley and now our new 2017 Judge.

Your MDVA and American Legion office invited Judge Crowley to the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs and Minnesota Association of County Veteran Service Officers Spring Conference for 2017 and to our surprise the Judge accepted.

Judge Crowley traveled to Minnesota, toured your American Legion Claims Division, meeting staff he had worked with in the PHC Pilot hearings and traveled to Mankato for the Conference.

During the Spring Conference the Judge mingled with County Service Officers and offered them personal time to talk about claims and appeals for several hours in two days. The Judge's presentation and information was well received by CVSO's and MDVA received much positive feedback asking for more similar training and if at all possible a return of the Judge for future events.

We thank Judge Crowley for taking the time to travel, discuss and present to our group. The judge made the event unique, informative and extraordinary.

The program known as Pre-Hearing Conference Pilot program has been hugely successful. To date, The American Legion Claims Division held four hearings, settled almost 17% of our current issues on behalf of our claimants and we have a 100% success rate in grants or remands of claims. Some claims even paying out decades of retroactive payments to claimants.

All of these actions taken years before they would have been decided under the normal BVA process. We are proud to announce this program has gained attention and support of U.S. Congress and the VA leadership.

The program is now in its initial year at eleven Regional Offices including St. Paul with all indication it will become a permanent VA program nationally.

Please contact your local County Veteran Service Office or contact the AL Claims Division directly at 612 970 5662. I look forward to bringing you more information about the Claims Divisions who are on the ground working hard for you every day.

## Sons of The American Legion

By Gene Olswold



The month of May is now here and the start of a very busy month for the American Legion Family. Many of our districts will be holding their District Conventions and electing their new leaders for the 2017-2018 year. I will be traveling to most of your conventions if at all possible. This is also the time when delegates are elected for the National Convention. My hope is each district has a successful and fruitful convention.

Our membership year is fast coming to an end and there are many unrenewed memberships out there yet to contact and get renewed. This is also the hard time for these renewals to get; but they are just as important to get as it was in the fall of 2016. It's time to don your SAL cap and

start knocking on the doors and get their renewal. As a suggestion, ask the help of your Legion Family Members (Legion, Auxiliary and ALR) for their assistance. They may have an "in" with some of these members to help you. Here is another point to remember, if they are an ALR member and only an SAL member, they must renew to be able to stay in the ALR. The last National cut-off date is May 10th to be at 100%. I know the Detachment of Minnesota can and will be at 100+% by this date. National sent out 3rd reminders the end of April so those members know who they are so go get them.

This month is also the month we celebrate and remember our family members who have passed away and all our comrades that fought for our freedom and gave their lives for the cause. Let's all pause on May 29th and give tribute to those who sacrificed so much for our freedoms we still have today. They may be gone but never forgotten.

During Memorial Day weekend, if you must travel, be safe out there and may you all have "Fair winds and following seas."

May God Bless all our Troops, Veterans and God Bless America.

## Membership Chart

As of April 19, 2017

District	2017 Goal	Total 2016	Total 2017	Percent of Goal	Same Date '16
1	9,380	9,322	8,736	93.13	
2	7,572	7,488	7,130	94.16	
3	11,977	11,912	11,418	95.33	
4	2,592	2,572	2,326	89.74	
5	2,679	2,657	2,386	89.06	
6	12,109	12,038	11,556	95.43	
7	6,695	6,619	6,227	93.01	
8	4,417	4,377	4,134	93.59	
9	7,015	6,950	6,578	93.77	
10	10,611	10,557	9,831	92.65	
At-large	1,953	2,710	2,321	118.84	
<b>Totals</b>	<b>77,000</b>	<b>77,202</b>	<b>72,643</b>	<b>94.34</b>	

## Veterans Choice Act extended

Continued from Page 1

outside sources, and "it's confusing to veterans."

Kelly agreed. "We absolutely agree with Sen. Tester. The VA has asked Congress to work on this. We need to have one program, if it's called "Care in the Community" or "Choice" or whatever.

In such a united program, the VA could handle the interface with the veterans, including scheduling appointments, and the third party contractor could handle claims and billing, he said.

Rep. Tim Walz, D-Minn., who is the ranking member of the House Committee on Veterans Affairs, said in a press release that there is much room for improvement in Veterans Choice.

Walz touched on that thorny issue of how much the VA should be privatized. "Our focus should always be on improving the veteran experience, especially when it comes to healthcare. That is why develop-

ing a veteran-centered health care system that preserves VA's core mission while utilizing the private sector where it makes common sense is an absolute must."

Walz said the current system has "clear and systemic flaws" and he said that a veterans care should be a conversation between the veteran and his doctor, and not something based on "arbitrary rules."

The VA has issued a request for proposals on how to streamline how it buys care from non-VA providers. Those proposals are expected this summer.

Tester said he hopes to have draft legislation on reforming the way the VA does business with outside parties by this fall.

Tester said he supports a strong VA that can take care of veterans' needs. "I think the VA is best suited to take care of these folks. So that the VA needs to be there, and we need to have a private sector that fills the gaps around the VA," he told public radio.

# Eyewitness to history

*Gregory Burt was aboard a ship in Pearl Harbor when the Japanese attacked on Dec. 7, 1941*

On December 7, 1941, just over 75 years ago, Coxswain Gregory S. Burt had a bird's eye view of one of the most catastrophic days in U.S. history.

He was stationed aboard the USS Castor (AKS-1), a supply ship anchored in Pearl Harbor, just across the bay from Battleship Row.

The sailors aboard the ship were getting ready for a ball game when the Japanese planes roared into the harbor.

Charlie Burt is a Marine Corps veteran who served a tour in Vietnam. He is a member of Waverly Post 305. He grew up in Northeast Minneapolis, and is a graduate of Edison High School. He is the son of Gregory Burt.

Charlie provided the *Legionnaire* with a letter his father wrote from his perch on the mast of the USS Castor the same day Pearl Harbor was attacked.

Gregory Burt continued to add to the letter for the next few days as the sailors scanned the skies for another attack.

Here is a transcription of that letter:

*Editor's note: The complete letter is transcribed, and only minor grammatical changes were made. The items inside brackets [...] have been added by the editor. The items inside parentheses (...) are Gregory Burt's notes.*

## Dec. 7, 1941

It was Sun. morning and we were sitting in the crews compartment talking about the ball game we were to play at nine o'clock – just then someone yelled General Quarters – and we figured it was just another drill, as we have them quite often.

I grabbed my helmet and went up on deck. The first thing I saw was a plane afire and it crashed into the harbor – and someone said that the Japs were here. I made a dash for the mast as my G.Q. station is in the crow's nest. When I reached the top, I could see Jap planes all over the sky. There was a big fire across the harbor where their bombs had fallen.

Fires were starting everywhere, even up in the cane fields.

Next a torpedo plane dove in close by our ship and our machine guns opened up on him, but he was moving too fast. But he banked and turned by the stern of two of our destroyers and the Jap felt the full force of 4 50 cal. M.G.s [machine guns].

First he caught fire and then his torpedo exploded. He was only 50 or 60 feet high and when he hit the water he sank immediately. All this time every ship in the harbor had their guns in action and the air was black with anti-aircraft gun bursts.

At this time I spotted another Jap plane. He was up pretty high and the plane was flying like the pilot was drunk. He dove into the ground about a half mile ahead of our ship – into the woods. His plane exploded as it hit.

I looked back towards the stern again and saw two torpedo planes swoop down along the main channel and launch their torpedos at our battle ships. One of the planes kept right on going and he crashed into the side of the nearest battle wagon and blew up as he hit.

Where the two torpedoes hit, I couldn't tell because I had to report another plane that was diving on our ship from the starboard side. He came in low and banked giving everyone a good shot at his belly, but no one hit him. As he went over the cruisers on our stern, black smoke started to pour out from his plane and that's the last I saw of him.

Over on the port side, the magazines in one of our battle wagons [the USS Arizona] let go and shot red flames for over 300 feet into the air. The water was covered with oil, and it burned leaving a cloud of black smoke all over the sky.

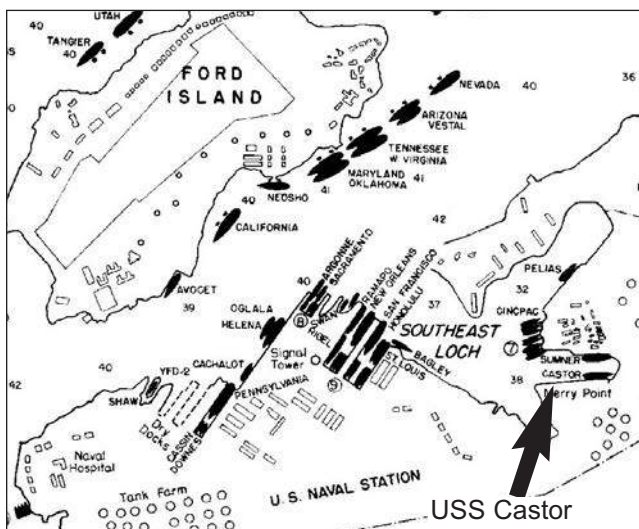
Then the dive bombers started to our stern. There must have been 30 of them and one by one they came tearing down on the shops and drydocks – dropping their bombs.

Two gunner's mates came up on the mast by me and mounted two machine guns up here. Then Mitchell (another fellow from Minneapolis) came up and we each had a machine gun and plenty of ammunition. There was a lull in the battle for about fifteen minutes and then we saw a Jap plane coming at us from the port side. As he swung over our bow, we let him have it. We emptied both guns at him (100 shots) and I watched him keep going straight on over the docks. As he got about five miles away his tail went up and he crashed and exploded. But I don't know for sure if we got him or somebody else did.

That's just about all for Sunday until 2 a.m. Monday morning we heard G.Q. sounded and we dashed for the mast. As we were going up the ladder, some Marines over in our ball park, just ahead of the ship, started firing and because it was all so dark, they didn't see our ship and they were firing right between our king posts. Mitchell and I yelled like hell and they raised their fire before we were hit. Then the air became alive with tracer bullets and A.A. shells



The USS Castor is shown at sea. Gregory Burt's battle station would have been in the main mast, just forward of the stack. The large upright structures are the king's posts.



A Navy map shows the location of all ships at 7:55 a.m. in Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941. Battleship Row is just off Ford Island. The USS Castor is at bottom right indicated by the arrow.

at some high flying bombers and we drove them off before they could unload their bombs on us.

## Dec. 8, 1941

There wasn't much going on today, but we are all still in the M.G. towers and waiting for them. The battleship over to port [Arizona] is still burning. The after A.A. gun on our ship got official credit for one torpedo plane. No one knows yet how many lives were lost, but there were plenty.

## Dec. 9, 1941

I looked over towards the battleships where one of them is laying on its side [USS Oklahoma] (the other is still burning) and there is a priest standing on the hull saying mass for all the dead that they haven't recovered yet.

G.Q. sounded this afternoon and we cleared our guns, but no planes were sighted by our patrol planes, so we secured our guns but we slept alongside them.

## Dec. 10, 1941

Sent a cablegram home announcing all's well. The word came over that only 35 men got off the battle wagon that burned – there were 1,500 men on her.

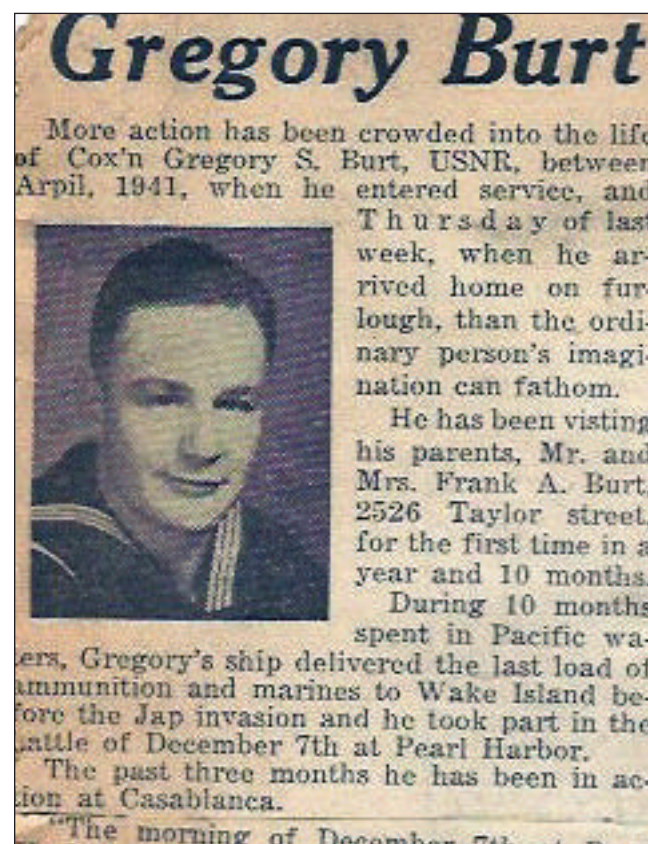
So we are still sitting up here waiting for them to come back – we're ready for them this time and they will get a hell of a hot reception.

That was the end of Burt's letter home. The after-action report filed by Castor's commanding officer praised the work of the crew. "The majority of the crew and all officers except the commanding officer and the executive officer are reservists. Their steadiness and fortitude in their first action, their fine discipline and battle spirit were superb."

Captain H.J. Wright particularly praised the work of two enlisted men who saw that a small craft containing 450 depth charges was tied up alongside the Castor. The men removed the "powder flag" that noted it was loaded with ammunition, which would have been an inviting target for a Japanese plane, and then moved the vessel to the other side of the harbor.

Burt was featured sometime later in the *Minneapolis Argus*, a newspaper serving the Northeast neighborhood. Burt had come home on leave from his current assignment which was in Casablanca, North Africa.

The story noted that the sailor had joined up in April of



A newspaper story in the Minneapolis Argus shows Burt's photo and tells of his adventures at Pearl Harbor and in North Africa.

1941. The story indicated that the USS Castor had delivered the last load of ammunition and Marines to Wake Island before the Japanese invasion there. The ship had returned from the mission just three days before the attack on Pearl Harbor.

He told the newspaper, "The morning of December 7th at Pearl Harbor was beautiful. It was calm, quiet and there were rainbows all around... there are always rainbows out there. We were just starting a ball game on our boat, the second game in a series of three, when the Japs came."

The story noted that Burt's battle station was the king post, or the main mast of the supply ship. The story said a bomb fragment missed Burt by inches and fell at his feet.

Burt told the story of seeing eight men on a launch that was strafed by a Japanese plane and all were killed. Five of the men were on their way to church.

Burt spent another year in the Pacific area before being transferred to sea duty off North Africa.

The news story noted that Burt had brought several souvenirs home and that they were on display in the newspaper's window. They included a pom pom shell that Burt had picked up on the beach at Pearl Harbor, the bomb fragment that just missed him, and various items from Casablanca.

Burt stayed in the Navy and retired as a Chief Boatswain's Mate while stationed at the Naval Training Center at Great Lakes in Illinois. He took a job as an insurance adjuster and later moved back to Minneapolis, his hometown.

He was planning to attend the 25-year anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor, but he died of a heart attack in 1965.

# SPOOKS IN CHINA

By Al Zdon

Bob Maynard is almost 96 years old.

He can take a business card in his right hand, make it disappear before your very eyes, and then make it reappear. It's magic.

He didn't need to use that legerdemain when he was a young Office of Strategic Services officer in China during World War II, but he had plenty of other tricks up his sleeve.

Helping coordinate America's spies in China, and doing other clandestine work, he was a worker at the center of a busy world war outpost.

And for a brief time, he was the aide to perhaps the war's most colorful character, Gen. "Wild Bill" Donovan, the chief of the OSS.

Among other achievements, Maynard managed to keep Donovan's throat from being slashed.

Robert Wynfield Maynard was born in 1922 in North Haledon, New Jersey, which he describes as a "hick town." He was the youngest of four children.

It helped, though, that his dad, who owned a silk mill, was a prominent business person in town. "We weren't rich. My dad always made the payroll first and then got his salary afterwards."

When it came time to go to high school, Maynard followed his brother in enrolling at nearby Lawrenceville School, one of the oldest prep schools in America dating back to 1810.

Maynard played baseball and soccer at the school, and rose up to be vice president of his class. When Europe went to war in 1939, Lawrenceville began a special National Guard training regimen on field artillery.

When Maynard enrolled at Princeton University, he took that basic army knowledge and signed up for the Reserve Officer Training Corps.

"A lot of my friends signed for the Navy officer program, which was called the V-12 program, and they stayed in college until they graduated. The Army changed its mind, though."

Maynard and about 60 of his classmates wound up at Fort Bragg in North Carolina as buck privates. "We all signed up for officer candidate school, and most of us got in. I ended up being a lieutenant."

After training at Fort Sill, his first assignment was to help train a group of African-American soldiers. "It was a good experience for me. It matured me a great deal."

Not that it always went smoothly. "They told me that I should mix some humor in, and I had some jokes that were real whizbangs. So I told them to these guys, and there was just silence in the room. And then when I was talking about something else, they'd start laughing.

"The sergeants who were under me made fun of me too. It probably didn't help that I was 21 and I looked like I was 15 years old."

Next stop was a replacement depot in Maryland.

"We'd go over the hill and there was a Nazi prisoner camp there. We would watch them play soccer. They'd all do the Hitler salute and the band would play a German song, and they were very good soccer players.

"I decided that I'd try to get an American soccer team together and take them on."

The idea went over like a lead balloon with his superior officer. "He said, 'How dumb can you get, lieutenant? Don't you know that they're the enemy?'" I thought it would be good for morale, but it became a black mark on my reputation."

Maynard's training included flying in small spotter aircraft and calling back coordinates for the artillery. "It took a lot of math, and while I could do the math on paper, it was much harder up in a plane where you had to do it in your head.

"I was apprehensive about calling in artillery on our own guys."

At a social event back in New Jersey, Maynard ran into a major who was assigned to the OSS, America's spy and clandestine mission group during the war.

"He asked if I knew languages, and if I had college, and if I'd be willing to go to jump school. I said yes. He asked if I wanted to be in an outfit that would go out on four or five-day missions where success or failure depended on intelligence, determination and skills. I said yes. Then he asked if I had any dependents. I said no."

The major told Maynard to sit tight and wait.

Not long afterward, he got orders to a residence just outside Washington D.C. From there he was sent to a group of buildings in Georgetown. He was put to the test.

"There were six of us in our group, and all we wore were fatigues. No markings. The guy next to me could have been a private or an admiral. We all had to concoct a phony name and background. I said my father was a professor from Kansas. We never used our real names."

The training was both mental and physical, and part of it was at the former Congressional Country Club that had been taken over by the OSS. "There were guys there with daggers in their boots and they had beards. They were tough

*Bob Maynard was a lieutenant in the OSS, America's spy agency during World War II. For a brief, glorious time, he became the aide to one of America's greatest characters during the war, "Wild Bill" Donovan, the head of the OSS. Maynard can now tell some of those stories.*



guys. The OSS used the place as a rest home for agents returning from an assignment."

One of the officers in charge was Wes Fesler, who later became the head football coach at the University of Minnesota.

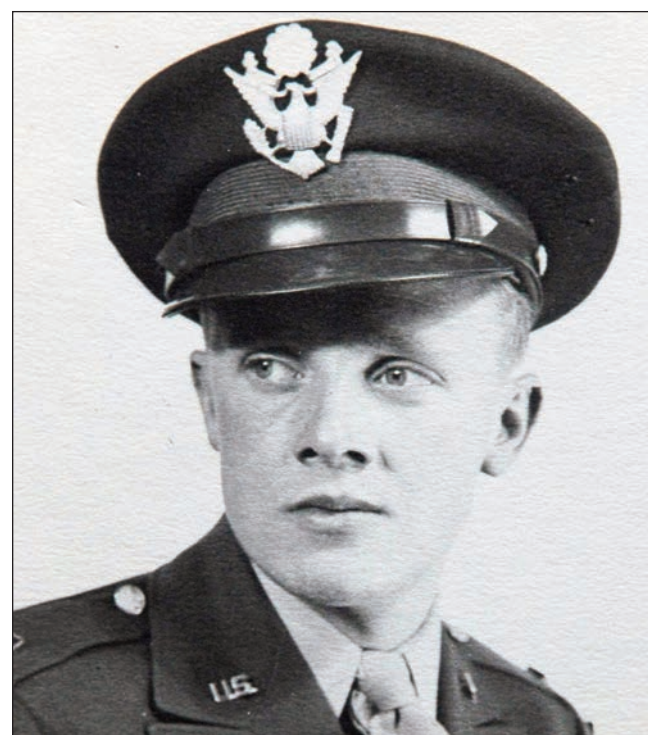
Part of the training was in Toronto, Canada. "We could learn things there that were illegal in the United States."

On the last day, Fesler told the men to take it easy, and he organized a basketball game. "But there wasn't any water, and we were getting thirstier and thirstier. Finally Fesler ordered somebody to get us something to drink.

"They came back with a big tub filled with grape juice. We were drinking it by the glassful. It was mighty good. We didn't know that it had been laced with gin or vodka."



**BOB MAYNARD**  
At home in Minneapolis



**BOB MAYNARD**  
As a young officer in World War II