

Navigating B-25s in the Pacific

By Al Zdon

Ed Zins helped coach Edina and Edina East to five state championships in high school hockey.

As the solitary assistant coach to legendary head coach Willard Ikola at Edina, Zins was elected to the Minnesota High School Hockey Coaches Hall of Fame for his career.

But long before he was a high school math and science teacher and coach, Ed Zins had another job.

Screaming over the Pacific jungles at treetop level at 320 miles per hour in a B-25 bomber, Zins, as a navigator/bombardier, dropped weapons on Japanese targets in World War II.

Donald Edwin Zins was born in Melrose in 1923, but moved with his family to St. Cloud when he was three.

"My dad was a railroad man, and when the yards moved from Melrose to St. Cloud we moved too."

He attended St. Anthony Grade School and graduated from St. Cloud Technical High School. "I was very interested in athletics and I played a lot of softball, hockey and stuff."

In the summers he worked on the railroad, and was a pin spotter at a local bowling alley.

Zins went to college at nearby St. John's and made it to his sophomore year when the United States entered World War II. In the spring of 1942, he made up his mind.

"I wanted to go where I wanted to go, not where they would send me. At that time, the most glamorous deal was the Army Air Corps. So I signed up."

He entered what was called the Cadet Program which was drawing young men from across America, mostly college students, to begin training to become a pilot, a navigator or a bombardier – which at that time were all officer positions.

But the Army wasn't ready for Zins, and he kept going to school until February of 1943 when they called him up. He was sent to Moorhead State Teachers College for a five-month basic course in math and science. "But I already had done a lot of that course work, and so I finished it in three months."

Next stop was Santa Ana, California, for a rigorous barrage of tests done by the Army. "It was two or three weeks of nothing but testing: physical, mental, everything. You had to have 20/20 vision. Two-third of the men who were sent there didn't pass."

Zins had no problem. Now he had to choose which direction his Army career would take. "Like everybody else, I wanted to be a pilot, but I knew a lot of the pilots washed out. I thought being a navigator would be a cinch. I thought it was a sure thing."

Out of the 200 cadets in his group, only five signed up to be navigators. None signed up to be bombardiers. Many pilots, if they washed out, were sent to bombardier school. "There was a lot of bitterness there."

Pre-flight school at Ellington Field, Texas, was 12 weeks of learning the basic skills: Morse code, aircraft recognition, everything to do with airplanes.

"I thought it was a fun time. Cadets are kind of a unique breed. We weren't officers and we weren't enlisted men. We had to chip in money out of our pay for our mess hall, but it was great. We had steak or shrimp every night. Nothing compared to the cadet mess."

Advanced training was at Hondo Army Airfield near San Antonio. "It was in a little bitty town with horses all over. It was a good old cowboy town."

The 19 weeks were spent learning how to get an airplane from one place to another. "Our classroom had great, big desks for the students – like office desks so you could lay out maps.

"There were 30 of us, and we were evaluated every

week. When you came in on Monday, you always counted the number of desks that were left. When we graduated, there were only 15 desks left."

Students used simulators to fly 25 missions of four hours each. They also studied celestial navigation, using sextants during the day, and studying the stars at night.

The next step was to navigate in a real airplane. Five students would go up with one of them actually plotting the course. The other students wouldn't say a word, but would make an estimate on where the plane would end up based on the lead student's work. The pilot also would keep silent, and just fly the plane where the lead student said to.

"There was a beacon at the airport we were heading for, and you could see it from about 40 miles away. If you were plotting the course, you were praying that that beacon would be straight ahead and not off to the side, or not visible at all."

If you got within three miles of the beacon, it was considered a successful navigation. "I lucked out, and I was one of the top students in the class."

On graduation, Zins got his navigation wings and his second lieutenant bars.

The new officers now had to wait to see what kind of aircraft they would be assigned to. It could be one of the huge bombers, like a B-24 or B-17, or a twin-engine medium bomber like a B-25 or B-26. "I wanted the B-25 because it had a better reputation for getting you home."

Zins got orders to bombardier's school at Roswell, New Mexico, which meant he would be flying a medium bomber. The smaller crews did not have separate navigators and bombardiers, but combined the job.

"The kids love arcade games, but we had the ultimate game. We had a trainer that would move across the hangar floor very slowly on three wheels. We would sit up high and use a bomb site to try and hit a small bull's eye on the floor. The bull's eye would move one way or another to simulate wind conditions. We loved doing that so much we would come in on weekends on our off time to do it."

It was Zins' first exposure to the legendary Norden bombsight, one of America's top secret technological developments during the war.

"The Norden bombsights never stayed in the planes. The

Ed Zins completed both Navigator and Bombardier schools in the Army Air Corps during World War II and got his wings for both. He used that training as a crew member on a B-25 that did treetop bombing in the Pacific, screeching over the trees at 320 miles an hour.



bombardiers had to go to a storage place that was guarded by an armed sentry. The bombardiers would have to carry a side arm when they brought the bombsight out to the plane. We were also taught, if need be, how to destroy the bombsight with our .45 pistols."

The goal for the bombardiers was to hit within 120 feet of a target while bombing from 12,000 feet. "It was unbelievable how well the Norden bombsight worked."

Zins graduated again in July of 1944, and got his second set of wings. "But nobody ever wore their bombardier wings."

But hang on, the training wasn't over yet. Zins now was sent to South Carolina where he was issued his overseas equipment, including his own sextant, and was given further training in how to fire a .50 caliber machine gun. The navigator/bombardiers joined their permanent B-25 crew



ED ZINS
At home in St. Cloud



ED ZINS
As a navigator in World War II

which also included a pilot, co-pilot, and three enlisted men: a radio operator/gunner, engineer/gunner and a tail gunner.

Then it was three more months of training. "We did a lot of flying, night, day, low-level, everything."

At Savannah, Georgia, the crew picked up their airplane. "It was a brand new, shiny B-25."

The crew flew the plane to California where it underwent modification so it could fly the 2,100 nautical miles to Hawaii, well beyond the range of the aircraft. A huge extra gas tank was put in the bomb bay, and another one was just behind it in the fuselage. The turrets were removed and put inside the plane. The enlisted crewmen were sent ahead by ship.

"We could only attempt the flight if we had a tailwind, and so we sat in a hotel in Sacramento for six weeks waiting. Every morning, we'd call in, and every morning they would say no. It was very boring duty."

Finally one day, they got the word. "The flight took 12 hours and 20 minutes. When we landed in Hawaii, we had about 30 minutes of fuel left."

Now the crew had to wait another five or six days while the B-25 was rebuilt. The crewmen rejoined the team, and they were off to the western Pacific by island-hopping across the ocean.

They got the plane to the island of Biak in New Guinea. "That was the last we saw our shiny, new airplane."

Zins recalls one incident from Biak. "There was this hot dog pilot who was always doing stunts. When planes were leaving Biak, sometimes the pilot would buzz the tower. Well, he buzzed the tower and then pulled back and sent the airplane straight up. The fuselage broke apart just behind the wings. The plane just broke in two. Everybody was killed."

"That was the day before we arrived at Biak."

The crew was sent to Nadzab Air Base in New Guinea. After nearly two years of training, they were ready to do their jobs. "It was our first introduction into the jungle and the heat and humidity."

The crew was assigned to the 69th Bomb Squadron, part of the 42nd Bombardment Group of the 13th Air Force.

"When the Army created an air base, they just bulldozed from the water back. They would make an airstrip with metal matting and other buildings. We lived in tents."

The tents were 16-foot square and had wooden floors elevated two feet from the ground. There was a roof, but no walls.

"You had to use mosquito netting to protect you from the insects and the snakes. It was pretty crude."

After training together for months, the crew found out they would no longer be flying as a team. "You never knew who you were going to be flying with from day to day. The idea was to blend the less experienced guys in with the guys who had been around. I was assigned for my first mission to a veteran pilot. Boy, could he fly an airplane."

Another change was that the B-25s being used in New Guinea did not use the Norden bomb sight. "Every mission we flew was right on the deck. You didn't need a bomb sight. The lower you flew, the safer you were."

Targets were usually Japanese bases along the coast. "We would come in at about 2,000 or 3,000 feet on the jungle side. When we could see the target, the pilot would dump the nose and dive to tree top level. We flew so low that sometimes we'd come back with foliage in our bomb bay."

The bomber would strafe the target with its .50 caliber machine guns and drop bombs that would skip along the ground until detonating. "We would sometimes drop at 10 feet and so you didn't want those bombs going off right beneath you. They would be set on eight or eleven second fuses, and they would skip along until they detonated about 200 yards behind us."

Even without a bomb sight, accuracy was still a major necessity. "We were coming in at 320 miles an hour, so one second could mean a big miss. But it was strictly by eyeball."

There were safety measures if a plane got hit by ground fire. "Out at sea was a Navy PBV in case we got hit. He could pick up the fliers in case we crashed into the sea. We called him our 'playmate.' I knew about 50 guys that got saved that way. On one mission, three planes went down and each had a crew of six guys. The "Dumbo" picked up 17 of those 18 guys."

The squadron next moved to a temporary base at Morotai, a small northern island in New Guinea. "That place was hell. We spent a miserable month. We didn't have regular tents. I never saw so much mud in my life."

In addition to bombing coastal targets, the B-25s would also take on Japanese shipping. "We loved those shipping strikes. We come along the top of the water and drop the bombs and they would skip along until they hit the ship, and it would blow up. The only problem was that the ships tended to fire back at us."

On the missions Zins flew, his aircraft was never seriously damaged by enemy fire, but on three missions there were bullet holes found in the fuselage.

Zins spent much of his time in the glassed-in nose of the B-25. There were two machine guns that were permanently aimed forward and were controlled by the pilot, but there was one machine gun that was flexible, and that was oper-



Zins, center top, with the crew of the B-25 he started with in the states. They never flew together in the Pacific.



Assistant Coach Ed Zins, left, and varsity coach Willard Ikola share some cheer after one of the five state hockey titles Edina won while Zins was there.



The Mitchell B-25 medium bomber was used extensively in the Pacific to attack Japanese bases.

ated by Zins. Later versions of the B-25 had 14 .50 caliber machine guns that could be used when strafing.

"The machine guns were more deadly than the bombs in many cases."

Many of the targets were in support of the ground troops. "It didn't matter to us. The guys on the ground would mark it with smoke, and we'd go after it - caves, trucks, convoys, whatever they wanted us to do."

One time, Zins fired his machine gun at a building that must have contained gasoline or ammunition because it blew up right in front of the B-25. "We had to fly right through that explosion. When we got to the other side we all looked to see if we still had two fans (propellers) turning. When we got back to the base, we saw the entire leading edge of the wings was dented in."

By early 1945, as the war moved north, so did the 69th Bomb Squadron. Its new base was on Palawan, an island chain off the west coast of the Philippines.

Zins said he was often amazed at the skill of the pilots. "We were attacking this one cave that contained Japanese machine guns, and as we were coming in we started getting machine gun fire from an area to the side of the cave. The pilot hit the rudder, the plane slewed over a little bit, he shot at and took care of that other machine gun, and then ruddered back and hit the cave. It was incredible."

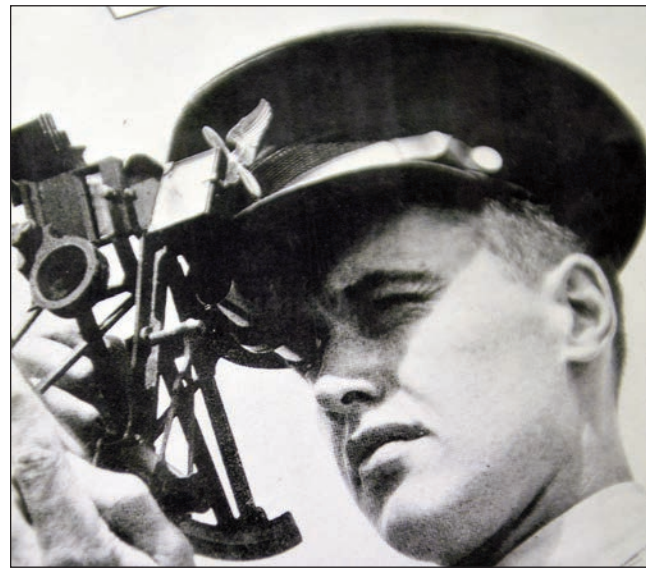
One of the 69th's most important missions was to take out the Japanese oil refineries at Balikpapan on the island of Borneo. "It was a major Japanese source of oil, just a huge oil complex. It was a massive mission and it was nine hours from the base."

The coordinated attack on Balikpapan started with a bombing run by the huge B-17s from 30,000 feet, followed by a strafing run done by P-38s. "We were next and the timing was just fantastic. We did it three times. The oil refineries were obliterated."

Zins' scariest mission was the day before the war ended.



Army Air Corps cadets wore a special insignia. They were neither officers nor enlisted men.



Part of the two years of training that Zins went through was learning to navigate by the sun using a sextant.



Zins' mother pins his wings on him after he graduated from Navigator's school.

"Usually we would take off over the water, but this time we took off toward the jungle. We were carrying a napalm bomb on each wing. This was a new thing, and it was devastating when dropped at a low level. There was one napalm tank on the end of each wing with a cable coming back to the cockpit where the engineer could let them drop."

"We were way overweight on takeoff, and about two thirds of the way down the runway, the right engine started acting up. We got off the ground just over the trees and the pilot was banking in a turn to get back to the airstrip."

"We couldn't release the napalm drop tanks because if one released and the other didn't the plane would be so unbalanced we'd crash. The pilot did an unbelievable job to get us back to the runway, and we were just about to touch down when the right engine quit."

"We were much faster than usual, maybe 120 miles an hour, and the airplane came in completely on the right landing gear. The tire blew right away and we went into a ground loop skidding toward the ditch. I don't know how the pilot did it, but we ended up straddling the ditch with the nose on one side and the tail on the other. The napalm didn't go off, and everyone was okay."

"The guys on the tower told me later that they were sure we were going to hit the tower."

"The next day the war ended."

Zins had flown 43 missions and earned three air medals.

One of closest friends, the co-pilot in his crew, had been killed on a mission.

"People always ask how we reacted to the news that the war was over. We didn't. We were just numb. All we wanted to know was when we'd go home."

Ironically enough, Zins had enough points so that he would have been rotated home in about two weeks. But when the war ended, the Army began using another system and Zins was stuck for a while.

"If I'd gone home on rotation, I'd have gotten a nice ride home on an airplane. Instead, I was sent to Leyte kind of a replacement depot. It took two or three months to finally catch a ship." The transportation home was aboard the Henry T. Allen, a troop transport.

"I left the United States by flying over the Golden Gate Bridge, and I came back on a ship that sailed under it."

Zins was a first lieutenant by this time, and on the train to Chicago he had the responsibility of carrying all the

orders for the enlisted men on the train. But he also got his own bedroom.

From Chicago, he took another train to the Twin Cities and then up to St. Cloud. "I got home on Christmas Eve eve. My dad met me at the train station at about 10 p.m. He was a yard master. I looked up and he was coming down the aisle for me. My mother was at home waiting for me."

Zins returned to St. John's immediately. "Our biggest problem was finding civilian clothes. There just weren't any. A lot of us wore our uniforms to class. What a time that was."

He ended up playing four years of hockey at St. John's and was captain of the team his senior year.

He graduated in 1947 and went into teaching and coaching. He taught math and science at Browerville, Morris, Melrose and finally at Edina. He was Willard Ikola's right-hand man for 20 years when Edina High School, later Edina East, won five state hockey titles: 1969, 1971, 1974, 1978,

and 1979. They appeared in 12 state tournaments during Zins' time there.

"I coached the junior varsity and then I was Ikola's assistant in the varsity games. We were good friends. He was also a navigator."

He retired from teaching in 1980 and moved back to his hometown. He coach St. Cloud Apollo hockey for three years.

After the war, Zins had gone into inactive reserves and then five years later he went into the active reserves to become a navigation instructor. He later flew in C119s and C130s. He retired as a lieutenant colonel and a master navigator. During his extended time in the service, he flew over 6,000 hours.

He married Audrey in 1948 and they had three boys and three girls. They now have 12 grandchildren and 13 great grandchildren. The Zins make their home on a hilltop in St. Cloud.

Taps

Bergstrom, Harold Anders, 76, Army veteran of the Vietnam War, died Feb. 1, 2016. He served in Vietnam and Germany and was awarded a Purple Heart. He was Sixth District Commander from 2011-12. He was a member of Crosslake Post 500.

Kindelberger, Corwin George, 94, Army veteran of World War II, died Jan. 16, 2016. He served in Europe. He later joined the Army Reserve and retired as a lieutenant colonel. He was a member of Montevideo Post 59.

Jacobson, Willard Arlen "Red," 79, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Feb. 19, 2016. He was a member of Lanesboro Post 40.

Seymour, Donald R. Sr., 81, Air Force veteran of the Korean War, died Feb. 20, 2016. He was a member of Red Wing Post 54.

Warner, Floyd A., 83, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Jan. 31, 2016. He was a member of Long Prairie Post 12.

Sanford, John B., 88, Navy veteran of World War II, died Jan. 30, 2016. He served as an air crewman on the USS Boxer, CV-21, and with torpedo bomber squadron VA-16A in the Pacific. He was a member of Mora Post 201.

Nelson, Richard A., 85, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Jan. 10, 2016. He was a member of Alexandria Post 87.

Murphy, Cornelius Joseph "CJ," 95, Navy veteran of World War II, died Jan. 18, 2016. He landed in the first wave on Omaha Beach. He was a member of Alexandria Post 87.

Zeis, Robert F., 88, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Feb. 17, 2016. He was a staff sergeant. He was a member of Holdingford Post 211.

Coles, Gerald, 73, Army veteran of the Vietnam War, died Feb. 4, 2016. He was a paratrooper in the 101st Airborne. He was a member of Franklin Post 308.

Lund, Philip, 96, Army veteran of World War II, died Jan. 23, 2016. He served in California. He was a member of Millerville Post 527.

Roers, Harold A., 85, Marine Corps veteran of the Korean War, died Jan. 23, 2016. He was a member of Millerville Post 527.

Aldous, George, 90, Army veteran of World War II, died Feb. 15, 2016. He was a member of Brainerd Post 255.

Schafer, Ira V., 84, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Feb. 18, 2016. He was a member of Waconia Post 150.

Holm, Larry R., 65, Air Force veteran of the Vietnam War, died Feb. 19, 2016. He was stationed in Thailand. He later joined the North Dakota Air National Guard and retired as a master sergeant. He was a member of East Grand Forks Post 157.

Majerus, Cecil "Sye," 86, Marine Corps veteran of the Korean War, died Feb. 18, 2016. He was a member of Brainerd Post 255 and served in the color guard.

Grimley, John Rex, 91, Army veteran of World War II, died Feb. 17, 2016. He served in Europe. He was a member of Austin Post 91.

Smith, Gerald "Smitty," 82, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Feb. 9, 2016. He was a past commander of Cloquet Post 262.

Hansen, Larry R., 91, Navy veteran of World War II, died Jan. 15, 2016. He was a member of Tyler Post 185.

Flack, Chester J., 81, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Jan. 19, 2016. He was a member of Willmar Post 167.

Dugstad, William L., 91, Army veteran of World War II, died Jan. 30, 2016. He was a member of Willmar Post 167.

Lehn, Lloyd A., 94, Navy veteran of World War II, died Jan. 31, 2016. He was a member of Willmar Post 167.

Johnston, Donald A. 88, Navy veteran of World War II, died Feb. 2, 2016. He was a member of Willmar Post 167.

Ormberg, Eugene H., 84, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Feb. 8, 2016. He was a member of Willmar Post 167.

Jacobson, Donald R., 93, Army Air Corps veteran of World War II, died Feb. 8, 2016. He was a member of Willmar Post 167.

Duscher, Timothy E., 57, Air Force veteran of the Panama War, died Feb. 15, 2016. He was a member of

Willmar Post 167.

Efta, Lou, 66, Army veteran of the Vietnam War, died Feb. 13, 2016. He served in Vietnam. He was a member of Warren Post 27.

Lee, Earl R., 82, Navy veteran of the Korean War, died Feb. 12, 2016. He was a member of East Grand Forks Post 157.

Hefti, Marlyn, 91, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Jan. 27, 2016. He served in Japan. He was a member of Marshall Post 113.

Wambeke, Richard, 79, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Feb. 10, 2016. He was a member of Marshall Post 113.

Tupa, Joseph L., 83, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Feb. 13, 2016. He was a member of East Grand Forks Post 157.

Neale, Herbert S., 89, Marine Corps veteran of World War II and the Korean War, died Feb. 12, 2016. He was a member of Albert Lea Post 56.

Stanek, Leonard R., 81, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Jan. 24, 2016. He was a member of Albert Lea Post 56.

Lombard, Arthur L., 78, Air Force veteran of the Vietnam War, died Jan. 27, 2016. He served in France. He was a member of Albert Lea Post 56.

Otterson, Raymond N., 86, Army veteran of the Vietnam War, died Jan. 14, 2016. He served in Vietnam as an administrative non-commissioned officer. He was a member of Albert Lea Post 56.

Hallum, Ronald A., 61, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Jan. 11, 2016. He served in Korea. He was a member of Albert Lea Post 56.

Callahan, Philip J., 91, Army veteran of World War II, died Jan. 15, 2016. He was a member of Albert Lea Post 56.

Gilbertson, Eleanor, 96, Marine Corps veteran of World War II, died Feb. 9, 2016. She was a member of New Brighton Tri-City Post 513.

Karsjens, Edward Everett, 94, Navy veteran of World War II, died Feb. 9, 2016. He was a member of Hillman Post 602.

Plowman, Byron G., 97, Army veteran of World War II, died Jan. 28, 2016. He was a staff sergeant and served in the 4th Armored Division. He was a member of Northfield Post 84.

Roscoe, John Thomas, 78, Navy veteran of the Vietnam War, died Feb. 4, 2016. He served on the USS Frontier AD-25 as a machinist. He was a member of Hackensack Post 202.

Holey, Bruce, 77, National Guard veteran of the Vietnam War, died Jan. 27, 2016. He was a member of Little Falls Post 46.

Stensgard, Richard Lee, 88, Air Force veteran of the Korean War, died Feb. 1, 2016. He was a member of Lanesboro Post 40.

Dupree, Harold J., 88, Army veteran of World War II, died Jan. 29, 2016. He served in Alaska. He was a member of Thief River Falls Post 117.

Watson, Glen C., 85, Navy veteran of the Korean War, died Jan. 8, 2016. He was a member of Brainerd Post 255.

Moe, Paul R., 88, Army veteran of World War II and the Korean War, died Jan. 24, 2016. He re-enlisted in the Army during the Korean War and served as a master sergeant in the artillery. He was a member of Granite Falls Post 69.

Bruce, Richard Clay, 79, Coast Guard veteran of the Vietnam War, died Jan. 12, 2016. He was a member of Long Prairie Post 12.

Casper, Gerald, 89, Navy veteran of World War II, died Jan. 21, 2016. He was a second class petty officer. He was a member of Long Prairie Post 12.

Lee, Virgil Howard, 76, Air Force veteran of the Korean War, died Jan. 28, 2016. He was a member of Pine Island Post 184.

Schlosser, Reynold Anton, 81, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Jan. 28, 2016. He served in Germany. He was a member of Waseca Post 228.

Polley, Edward A., 93, Army veteran of World War II, died Feb. 1, 2016. He served in Italy. He was a member of Cloquet Post 262.

Winterfeldt, Edgar, 87, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Jan. 20, 2016. He served in Company A, 369th Engineer Amphibious Support Regiment in Washington State. He was a member of Brownton Post 143.

Secora, Kenneth R., 95, veteran of World War II, died Feb. 3, 2016. He was a member of Hackensack Post 202.

Kueber, Alyn, 85, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Jan. 28, 2016. He served in the infantry. He was a past commander of Park Rapids Post 212.

Sopkowiak, Robert F., 70, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Jan. 27, 2016. He served in Germany. He was a past commander and current chaplain of Silver Lake Post 141. He served on the honor guard.

Weber, Leroy, 75, Marine Corps veteran of the Vietnam War, died Jan. 22, 2016. He was a member of Cold Spring Post 455.

Rausch, William V., 82, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Jan. 28, 2016. He was a member of Cold Spring Post 455.

Swangler, Joseph, 83, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Jan. 31, 2016. He was a member of East Grand Forks Post 157.

Knaus, Abraham, 82, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Feb. 2, 2016. He was member of East Grand Forks Post 157.

Reiss, Donald E., Army Air Corps veteran of World War II, died Jan. 3, 2016. He was a member of St. Louis Park Post 282.

Sorum, Jerome, 90, Army veteran of World War II, died Feb. 2, 2016. He was a cook in the Philippines. He was a member of East Grand Forks Post 157.

Hodny, Tony, 89, Army veteran of World War II, died Jan. 14, 2016. He was a member of East Grand Forks Post 157.

Borka, Richard L., "Amos," Army veteran of World War II, died Jan. 25, 2016. He was a member of Waconia Post 150.

Goos, Earle Rudolph, 83, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Jan. 12, 2016. He served in Company L, 21st Infantry Regiment. He was a member of Roseau Post 24.

Marquardt, Jerry, 82, veteran of the Korean War, died Jan. 22, 2016. He was a member of Glenville Post 264.

Schwartz, Dale F., 81, Army veteran of the Vietnam War, died Jan. 19, 2016. He was a member of Bertha Post 366.

Jacobson, Robert M., 92, Navy veteran of World War II, died Jan. 18, 2016. He was a member of Park Rapids Post 212.

Christoffer, Douglas E., 90, Air Force veteran of World War II, died Jan. 15, 2016. He served in the infantry and with the 301st Fighter Wing on Okinawa. He was a member of Worthington Post 5.

Palmer, Robert, 70, Air Force veteran of the Vietnam War, died Jan. 6, 2016. He was a member of Mora Post 201.

Lenn, Charles John, 81, Navy veteran of the Korean War, died Jan. 17, 2016. He served on the USS Archerfish. He was a first class petty officer. He was a member of Pine Island Post 184.

Otto, Vernon Kenneth, 93, Army veteran of World War II, died Jan. 21, 2016. He was a member of Austin Post 91.

Grabanski, James, 75, Air Force veteran of the Vietnam War, died Feb. 25, 2016. He served in the 98th and 303rd Air Refueling Squadrons. He was a member of East Grand Forks Post 157.

Cleveland, David J. "Grover," 67, Navy veteran of the Vietnam War, died Feb. 17, 2016. He was a member of North Branch Post 85.

Wille, Clarence Dean, 90, Navy veteran of World War II, died Feb. 22, 2016. He was a member of Waconia Post 150.

All those submitting obituaries to the Taps section in the Legionnaire should make sure they include the full name of the deceased, age, branch of service, war era the veteran served in, exact date of death, details about the veteran's service including valor medals, and the home post and post number of the deceased, including any offices he held.

World War II History Round Table

Liberators not ready for what they found

By Al Zdon

In the final days of World War II, as the American Army drove across Germany, the U.S. soldiers had no clue what they were about to find.

Dachau. Buchenwald. Mauthausen.

They were known as concentration camps, or often as death camps. What they had in common were some of the grimmest, ghastliest scenes in human history.

"The soldiers had no reference point, yet here it was right in front of them," said John McManus, a history professor at Missouri University of Science and Technology and an author of 10 books on military history. "The average soldier knew nothing about these camps."

McManus was later joined at the February World War II Round Table by two American liberators and a Holocaust survivor.

The first concentration camp liberated by the U.S. Army was at Ohrdruf in central Germany.

"It was a sub-camp of Buchenwald, and it wasn't there just for genocide, but mainly for slave labor," McManus said.

Unlike some other camps such as Auschwitz and Bergen-Belson, built mainly to exterminate European Jews, Ohrdruf was populated mainly by political prisoners from various countries and Jews were a minority inside its walls.

"They were building railroad tracks and digging tunnels. There was a plan that the German high command would relocate here if Berlin fell."

In the days before the arrival of the American 4th Armored Division and the 89th Infantry Division, most of the prisoners were moved on death marches toward Buchenwald, the central camp.

"The U.S. troops began seeing bodies in the ditches. They found some half-dead survivors. At one place they found three dozen bodies stacked up execution-style.

At Ohrdruf, it only got worse. "Near the parade ground in a shed were three dozen naked bodies with marks of brutality on them. They were dusted with lime to keep the stench down, but it didn't work. Many soldiers could never smell lime again without triggering that memory."

Not far away was a burial ground, but the German captors had been trying to cover up the evidence by exhuming about 3,000 bodies and burning them in improvised bonfires. They were interrupted in this grisly task by the advancing Americans.

"There was gray bone ash knee deep, and a pungent stench. The soldiers were shocked, horrified, dismayed, sickened, and they felt guilty. They wept and they gawked."

McManus quoted one soldier, "We thought we were hardened combat vets, but some of us cried like babies."

At camp after camp, and sub-camp after sub-camp, the soldiers found emaciated survivors and the piles of bodies.

Trying to help the cadaver-like survivors was also traumatic for both sides. Prisoners that were fed with GI rations or other food often died on the spot because their bodies couldn't handle the rich food. "The Americans would have to live with that guilt.

"In many cases the prisoners were more dehydrated than starving. The GIs offered them water from their canteens. The prisoners would guzzle it down, and then go and retch. The prisoners thought they were being poisoned."

The Americans also sought to keep the prisoners in the dreadful camps because many had typhus and needed to be quarantined.

Heroic efforts were made by the Army to save the survivors. "The 120th Evacuation Hospital at Buchenwald treated 5,500 prisoners and only had 51 deaths. They did a good job."

McManus brought up the subject of revenge on the part of Americans against German guards or other military. There is one documented case of Americans opening up on German prisoners and killing 25 and wounding 50 in a coal yard.

"In the end there was no trial. It was called a bad leadership situation."

The liberation of the camps had a profound effect on many Americans. "There was nothing uplifting or redeeming about liberating these camps. They saw what humanity was capable of doing, and most could not come to terms with that."

Many veterans would not talk about the details of the liberation until much later when denying the Holocaust became a trend. "Then they started talking about it."

McManus is the author of *Hell Before their Very Eyes*, a book on the liberation of the camps.

The panel included two veterans of the war, and one Hungarian Jew who narrowly missed the death machine.

Dr. Robert Fisch, who later became a professor at the University of Minnesota, grew up in Hungary. He said as a



young man, as a Jew, he was not allowed to go to college or to join the military. "But we were living comfortably. I did not know about anything going on in the world."

In 1944, Germany invaded Hungary, which was already an Axis ally, and changed the leadership of the country. The plight of the Jewish population worsened.

"We were forced to wear a six-inch Star of David on our clothing when we went out," Fisch said. "By June, over 600,000 of us had been sent to Auschwitz."

Fisch's job at first was working with the Jewish Council in Budapest. Later he was sent to a work farm where conditions were terrible but not deadly. On Jan. 17, 1945, he and other Jews began a death march into Austria.

At one point, the prisoners were forced to go inside a building where other prisoners were being kept. "There was a horrible smell. Inside, the prisoners were in such a condition they couldn't get up. Many had typhoid fever. We were forced to spend two nights there. Millions of lice infested us. I tried to kill them, but it was a hopeless situation."

They moved away from the Russian advance into Austria by forced marches and sometimes on trains. "I was the first one to get the typhoid fever. I had a high temperature. Within two days, a lot of people had it."

Fisch saw shootings and at one point he was beaten with a rifle. "We had to walk many days, and any who tried to escape were shot by the guards. At one point, a civilian woman threw us an apple. She was shot on the spot."

Eventually Fisch reached the Mauthausen-Gusen concentration camp, where they spent some time until that camp was evacuated. "We were walking again, and every night we'd sleep in a barracks.

"At some point, you have no feeling whatsoever. All you care about is food. At one point I got some sugar cubes. It was the most incredible thing I ever had in my life."

On May 4, 1945, the Americans liberated the prisoners. "I was so weak I couldn't see. If they had come the following day, I wouldn't be here."

Reflecting back, Fisch said, "It's incomprehensible what happened there. When people say they don't believe it, I understand. It was unbelievable.

"We need to learn humanity. The most dangerous people are those who are indifferent and allow extremists to do this sort of thing."

Fisch has written a book, *Light from the Yellow Star: A Lesson of Love from the Holocaust*.

Merrill Burgstahler grew up in Hector and Glencoe and was drafted when he was working at a defense plant in Minneapolis in 1943. "I was thinking of joining earlier, but my father said, 'Wait until you're drafted, the war will be long enough.'"

He eventually joined the 6th Armored Division which fought its way across France and into Germany. "We were fighting to get the war over with and get home as quickly as possible."

Near the end, Burgstahler learned that elements of the division had helped liberate Buchenwald in April, 1944. His superior officer asked Burgstahler if he had seen Buchenwald yet. "He said, 'Take my driver and my Jeep and go see it.'"

He spent two or three days at the camp and had an inmate guide, a Hungarian Jew who had survived. As he was being shown around a prisoner's barracks, Burgstahler wondered where the kitchen was.

"There was just one kettle, about four feet in diameter. Everything went in there. Each prisoner got a liter of soup and a crust of bread each day.

"They slept on board shelves, four deep. The strongest got on the top shelf, but everyone had dysentery, so you know what happened to the weak ones."

If a prisoner went to see the doctor, he was given a shot that caused him to go unconscious. "He got shoved out the back door and two prisoners would take him to the crema-

torium. Why would fellow prisoners do this? Because they got two crusts of bread a day."

The prisoners were sent down a coal chute, and Germans at the bottom would knock out their gold teeth. Then the prisoners were hung up on the wall with a cord around their neck until they died.

"There were six ovens, side by side. They could do two bodies in 14 minutes. Over 65,000 died at Buchenwald. That's the population of St. Cloud."

Burgstahler went back with 15 other American liberators to Germany to commemorate the freeing of the death camps in 2010. He has spoken to thousands of people and school children in recent years about his experiences.

"The next generation must get an idea that this happened."

Allen Porter grew up in Wauwatosa, Wisconsin, and volunteered for the Army just before he got drafted in 1943. He joined the 78th Infantry Division.

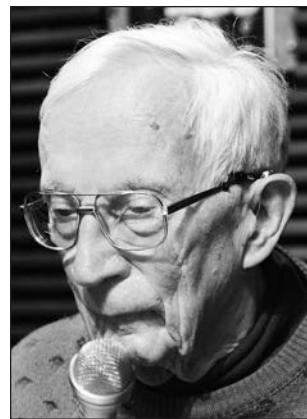
Part of his job was to clear minefields. "You never knew when one of the mines might be booby-trapped. We were under heavy fire at the Battle of the Bulge and I was just reaching for a mine when a shell came in. I quit reaching and hit the dust.

"When the shelling was over, I went back to reach for the mine, but one of my buddies, who had more sense, said that particular mine looked booby-trapped. So we tied a rope to it, moved about 50 feet away and pulled the rope. It was booby-trapped."

His division also helped liberate Buchenwald, and he later sent a v-mail letter home describing his experience. His daughter read the letter to the Round Table audience, and he described many of the same experiences that Burgstahler had witnessed.

He described some of the experiments done at the camp. "If any prisoner had something wrong with him, he was taken to a laboratory and killed."

Porter said it's important to never forget those camps. "It's up to all of us to see it never happens again."



ALLEN PORTER



MERRILL BURGSTAHLER



JOHN McMANUS



DR. ROBERT FISCH

District Commanders

Deer Hunters' Assn. donates art prints

FIRST DISTRICT
Roland Hanson
 Commander




Hello Comrades, We made it through the busy month of February. It was busy but a lot of fun.

The National Commanders Tour had very good turnouts at all four stops. He is a very nice guy and a good speaker. He got a big kick out of his first snowmobile ride in Winona.

The Sweetheart Rally in Legionville which included the ice fishing contest and a chili cookoff contest was a fun day too. The First District didn't win the chili cookoff but we did get a lot of compliments on the chili. We didn't win at the minnow races either.

The program presented on Four Chaplains Sunday served as a remembrance of their bravery and their faith. A model of faith and service we should embrace.

District One and District Three also had a ice fishing contest. I didn't win there either but I got wet feet.

The Appreciation Dinner is coming up on the fifth of March. It will be a suit and tie affair. Ticket sales are closed. Bring your appetite and lots of membership.

Remember the Area Three Rally that was scheduled for February 27th has been moved to March 12th. It will still be held in Spring Grove Post 249.

Remember to thank a veteran.

SIXTH DISTRICT
Dewayne Collins
 Commander




February did not start out to be a good month. On the 1st we lost a great friend and Legionnaire, Harold Bergstrom. He was the Vice Commander for the East Sub. Our sympathy goes to his family.

Membership is our main focus now at this time of year. The district is at 93% now. It would be nice to be able to make it to 95% by the department Appreciation Rally at Legionville on March 5th. Therefore encourage those who have not paid to pay there dues.

The Sweetheart Rally went very well and all had a great time. There was a chili cook off competition and the 9th district won the contest.

Mid-Winter conference started out on a very cold start of -20 in the morning, but it went very well. The reports were great that where given, great food, and a great speakers in the afternoon and we were done by 15:15.

The National Commander made a visit to the Little Falls Legion on February 1st. Had a great visit with him. He said that he walked on water while in Minnesota, drilled a fishing hole, and rode a snowmobile. Nothing like that in Georgia. They served a great meal for him as well.

As we make our move through the month of March spring is just around the corner. Along with all the events I will continue to visit posts, county council and other meetings as time permits. As we work together this year we keep the 6th district best in the state.

Please do not hesitate to contact me at dcollinsr@yahoo.com or 218-821-7314



The St. Cloud VA Medical Center has recently added several new patient areas, and has created many bare walls. Department Commander Jim Kellogg approached the Minnesota Deer Hunters Association in Grand Rapids about donating wildlife prints, and they did. At top, Kellogg picks up the prints from Josh Salisbury, MDHA merchandise coordinator. At bottom, Kellogg delivers the prints to Medical Center Director Barry Bahl.

THIRD DISTRICT
Don Skow
 Commander




Greetings Thundering Third.

Congrats to everyone in the Third District on your membership efforts. We are still leading the Department but we need about 600 more members to meet our goal. Let's get this done as soon as possible. The Department Appreciation Rally will be held at Legionville on March 5th and Department Membership Director Jim Lucas wants 220 members from the Third District by then. We can get this done.

The Consolidated Post Reports will be mailed to your Posts soon. It is very important to get these completed and returned to Department before June 1st. Our goal this year is to have 100% reporting from the Third District. Remember applications for Scholarships, Law & Order, and Boy's State Pre-Registration are due to Department on April 1st.

The Third District Commander's Testimonial will be held at Post 225 in Forest Lake on May 7th. More information to follow. Thanks for all you do for your communities and the veterans and their families. For God and Country.

SEVENTH DISTRICT
Karen Welander
 Commander




Greetings, Mighty 7th.

I want to thank all of those that attended the National Commander Barnett events on February 2nd in Morris and Litchfield, especially those from other Districts.

March is Community Service month. It shows the commitment The American Legion has for the good of our veterans and their families. The countless hours of volunteering and commitment to our communities shows that The American Legion does more to help our veterans than we ever envisioned when we join this great organization.

I encourage all Posts to work with your district vice commander and invite him to your post to attend a Post meeting, discuss activities at the Post and come up with new ideas to get members.

For those of you who have a facebook page, scan our district website and look for things to post on your facebook page. Invite friends to see what's going on with your Legion Post and all Legion activities.

There are many rallies, meetings, and other activities coming up in which we all have an opportunity to participate. Believe me these events are lots of fun, so come. As a Family we can make great things happen.

It's simple, just keep serving.



CLAM WINNER -- There was no winner at the Legionville fishing contest, and so a drawing was held for prizes. Brenda Kellogg won the Clam Vista Thermal Hub fish house. Those at the rally won 10 Clam rod and reel combos, three Clam fishing jerseys, and five Clam fishing buckets.

FIFTH DISTRICT
Gary Martin
 Commander




Greetings from the Fifth District

Another Great Winter Carnival Parade and Membership Rally. The 4th and 5th Districts joint Winter Carnival Rally was great. Thank you to the 4th District volunteers who made it successful. Thank you to Department Commander Jim Kellogg and Department President Sandy Frederickson for leading the parade with the 4th District Banner.

Sweetheart Rally was a great success: great chili, program and activities.

It's time to start accumulating information for your annual reports, Consolidated, Children and Youth, Service Officer, Community Service etc. Let's strive for 100% reporting.

Nominations for 5th District Officers and 5th District Legionnaire of the Year will be due soon.

5th District Committee Chairs, please start preparing your convention reports and deceased lists for publication in Memorial Service Program and Convention Book. The 5th District Convention Call will be mailed to each Post Commander and Adjutant the first week of March. The Convention Committee is working diligently to make your 2016 Convention a great one.

Vice Commanders are continuing to contact their assigned posts to clean-up those last few members who still have not remitted their dues.

As always, "Keeping Forward and Keep It Positive."

NINTH DISTRICT
Denise Milton
 Commander





Greetings Roaring Ninth District. I can always tell when the end of winter is near - the seed catalogs have arrived in our mailboxes. They appear in the nick of time to remind us that spring is going to finally arrive. I love to look at all the new kinds of plants and plan and prepare for my garden. That is what we need to do now to gather the remainder of our membership for the year. We have met all the goals set before us, now comes the hard part-getting those last few. It is personal contact that plays an integral part in procuring them-make a few calls or better yet make a personal visit for a cup of coffee and discuss the reasons why they should remain a member of the greatest VSO in the world. Make use of MyLegion.org for members that are in post at large and contact them-it is only a matter of asking. Please contact myself or your area vice commander if you have any questions on using the site.

Consolidated post reports will be due soon, so start collecting and computing your data to get credit for all you do for our veterans, community and children. I know that some of you think that you don't do anything, but that isn't true. Stop and think how many of you visit a sick veteran, volunteer at the Senior center, are grandpa/grandma to school children, clean gravesides for Memorial Day, put flags up for holidays? It isn't only monetary gifts that are counted on the report, even if it is only one item you fill out,

do so, and mail it in. This is what we use when lobbying for veteran's benefits in Washington D.C.

Remember to keep our military, their families and our fellow comrades who struggle daily with their daily health, physically and emotionally in your prayers.

TENTH DISTRICT
Bill Johnson
 Commander




Greetings from the Mighty Tenth.

As Commander I have had the opportunity to visit a number of Posts in my District. And I am here to tell you, the Tenth District Posts are playing a vital role in the communities, and serving the needs of their fellow veterans.

Now that we are struggling for membership, I just need to point to the Post in Bruno, a town with a population of 80 people, and a Legion Post with 40 members. This little Post that almost turned in their charter a few years ago, grew to the size they are now, because of the commitment of a few members. Their Post Commander Robert Olson, was totally committed to saving the Post that carried his family name. So how they do it? The answer is simple; they asked everyone they knew who was a veteran to join.

A second Post is my home Post of Osseo/Maple Grove, who have become a real presence in their community. The Post provides numerous opportunities for community organizations to raise funds. Our Post Service Officer, Larry (Hop) Haapoja takes pride in helping his fellow veterans sign up for the VA system, by driving them to their appointments. So far he has done this for over 98 Veterans.

So what does it take to make your Post grow? That you the individual member get involved, and that the Post stays involved with their community.



They weren't exactly jumping out of the holes at the inaugural Department Fishing Contest held on North Long Lake prior to the Sweetheart Rally at Legionville. Commander Jim Kellogg keeps an eye on his line.



Chuck Stone shows off his splendid catch during the rally. He limited out in the species of bottle bass.



Don Amundson presents Diane Sullivan with a rose in honor of the Sweetheart Rally.

Sweetheart Rally and Fishing Contest



State American Legion Rider Director Scuffy Paulson presented Past Department Commander Peggy Moon with a special thank you for her efforts for the ALR.



The bets were hot and heavy at minnow races. There were some reports that some minnows were abused by being eaten.



Membership Chair Jean Walker and Membership Director Jim Lucas hold up a toy truck. The truck was a gift from Walker to Lucas, a former truck driver, whose theme is "Hauling in Membership."



The Second District's Raleen Tolzmann and Darlene Breamer serve up some piping hot bowls of chili in the first annual chili contest.

Photos by
Dennis DeLong
Dept. Historian

Membership Chart As of February 24, 2016

District	2016 Goal	Total 2015	Total 2016	Percent of Goal	Same Date '15
1	9,627	9,574	9,000	93.49	9,229
2	7,779	7,705	7,257	93.29	7,452
3	12,165	12,116	11,575	95.15	11,612
4	2,561	2,560	2,396	93.56	2,397
5	2,829	2,788	2,555	90.35	2,680
6	12,485	12,415	11,598	92.90	11,842
7	6,997	6,926	6,441	92.08	6,642
8	4,630	4,593	4,169	90.04	4,306
9	7,332	7,172	6,728	93.03	6,909
10	10,964	10,917	10,194	92.98	10,496
At-large	3,734	2,661	2,559	68.53	2,482
Totals	81,000	79,427	74,472	91.94	76,047



The Auxiliary Bulletin

No. 16-8

President Sandy Fredrickson

March 2016

Secretary Sandie Deutsch

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

The President's Column

By
Sandy
Fredrickson



Where has the year gone?

It seems I just started and now I need to start planning for the finish.

No, I said I—it's *we* need to start planning for the finish.

Thanks for your kindness, support, and prayers through this challenging time for our son Scott. We ask that you continue to pray for him to have a full recovery with this back injury. If any of you know what spinal cord injuries can do to a person—it throws your whole life into a whirlwind, including the family members. With God by our side and him walking with us, we will get through this bump.

Now back to our Auxiliary.

Ladies, I need your help—we need to make a change, a positive change with this organization. To see and hear the gratefulness our Veterans have for us is unreal. To know and hear we have made huge differences in the lives of our Veterans and their families tells me, we do have a positive influence in this organization. To see our Veterans again perform (the Creative Arts) for the National Salute to Veterans in St Cloud was awesome. To do the walk through and be able to "thank" the Veterans for their service to all of us is beyond what we can express with words. We, the auxiliary, do great things and are appreciated by our Veterans.

How many units??? How many members are interested in winning a PUFL membership???

How many members are willing to help me turn this department upside down with membership?? How many members are willing to take the bull by the horn and help change attitudes within our organization?? How many members are going to attempt to help their unit reach the membership they had last year—even grow it by one???

How many members are willing to speak with The Legion counterparts and question if their spouse, mother, daughter, granddaughters are members?? If The American Legion has 80,000 plus members shouldn't we be 5 times that? How many members are willing to build pride back in our organization?? Ladies—it is up to us. You and I can make a difference.

The big payoff this year is for every Unit to reach goal by Convention their names will be placed in a hat. A drawing will take place for the winner of the PUFL. I believe your Membership Chairman Jean plans on doing this at Department Convention.

Remember, membership is everyone's responsibility. If you want the chance for your name to be in the drawing, help your unit reach its goal.

Will your name be in the hat? Will you be the lucky member???

One other huge task for Units and Districts is our Strategic Planning.

How has your year been going? How is your Unit doing, how about your district? Has your Unit/District taken the initiative to look at your strategic plans for the next 5 years? Have you had conversations in your Unit/District to see what matters to the members? What difference does your Unit/District do for the Veteran?? Their families?? The communities???

Where will your Unit or District be in 5 years? Remember, it all starts at home! You are the grassroots to this organization. It is you that makes the difference of a good unit/district to a "great" unit/district.

Reminder: March is Community Service Month. What will your unit do? We would like pictures and stories about the special things you do. Please send them to the Department. Dennis and I would like to wish each of you a "very blessed Easter." Hope you each attend the church of your choice. Enjoy the season of what and how our Savior suffered and died for each of us, so we can be saved.

Until next month—God Bless each of you.

Junior Conference will be held in Fairmont April 8-9

The 53rd Annual Department Junior Conference will be held April 8th and 9th at the Grace Lutheran Church in Fairmont, Minnesota, hosted by the Second District. We are hoping that a large number of the Junior members are able to attend and participate. If your Juniors have never attended a Department Junior Conference, plan to join us this year. Junior members will enjoy a "fun night" on Friday, April 8th, the night before the opening of the Conference. The 2nd District has been working hard to make this a special evening for the Junior members.

On Saturday the Conference will be called to order at 9:00 a.m. by Bryce Soltis, the Department Honorary Junior President. This is a day when the Juniors become reacquainted with each other, make new friends, learn how to conduct a meeting and participate in it. This meeting is a JUNIOR Conference and the JUNIOR members run it. They are very capable young women.

The "Call to Conference" was included in the January Unit mailing, giving you all the details. Junior Activities Chairmen, please obtain this information from your Unit President so you can make your plans to have your Juniors attend. You do not need to have an organized Junior group to participate. All Juniors are welcome. The information is also posted on our website mnala.org

Hotel reservations must be made by March 25, 2016. Special pricing was given by the Holiday Inn Fairmont, 1201 Torgerson Drive, Fairmont, MN. The direct telephone number is (507) 238-4771. Block name: American Legion Junior Auxiliary. There are also many other hotels in the area.

The Department Honorary Junior President Bryce has chosen to raise monies to help complete the mural being painted at the Veterans Cemetery at Camp Ripley. Please bring your donation to the Conference so Bryce can finalize her project.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Happy 97th birthday American Legion. Units, make sure to plan something fun to recognize your Post and wish them a "Happy Birthday." We, of the Auxiliary, are proud to serve with you for the purposes upon which our organizations were founded. March is also Community Service month.

MEMBERSHIP

We are still hanging pretty close to the top. This seems to be the time of the year when Minnesota drops very quickly to the bottom of the list. I challenge every Unit member to step up to the plate and help your Membership Chairmen by making one phone call to a member who hasn't renewed her membership, ask a former member to rejoin or sign up a new member. Always remember to have one of those application forms handy in your purse "just in case". Let's make President Sandy very proud and get our membership back to the top.

DEPARTMENT CONVENTION

Our Department Convention is coming up fast and will be held July 21 - 23, 2016 at Kahler Hotel in Rochester, Minnesota, hosted by the Rochester American Legion Family #92. Further information will be forthcoming. Our appreciation is sent, in advance, to all The Legion and Auxiliary members who will be serving on the convention committee for their efforts to ensure another outstanding Department Convention. Circle these dates on your calendar and plan to attend.

Don't forget the Poppy contests that will be held at the Department Convention. They are Wearable Poppy Art and Dress a Doll or Teddy Bear; that best describes "Serving Those Who Served." (Please check the Trophy & Awards for all specifics) Entries must be at the Department Convention on Thursday, July 21st. Both of these contests are easy to participate in. Get your thinking caps on and start creating. The Fall Conference entries were simply fabulous - let's make this even better.

2017 DIRECT BILLING

All Units received a request for information on your Unit's 2017 dues. This information is due in the Department office by March 15th. If your Unit has not yet responded, please send in the information. The form is on the mnala.org website under the Forms tab and select 2017 Unit Data Form Direct Billing. When setting your 2017 dues please keep in mind the National and Department dues of \$18 per person so your Unit dues should be greater than that so you have some working capital in your Units. If we haven't received your form, a second notice will be in the next Unit mailing.

LET'S NOT FORGET THEM

Sometimes in our rush we overlook some important people who need us - our own Auxiliary members. There are many of our members who cannot attend meetings or Unit functions, can't leave their homes due to illness, weather or age and would appreciate a visit from an Auxiliary member. In our efforts to serve others, let's not forget our own members who need us and contact them only when their "dues are due". Make an effort to do something special for them.

2016 POPPY UPDATE

Poppy time is fast approaching. To date, 353 out of 440 Units have ordered their 2016 small and/or large Poppies. To the remaining 87 units, please place your orders now.

Shipment of Poppy orders began as orders were received, processed, and Poppies were available. We are shipping orders based on the 'needed by' date reported by the Unit when the Poppies were ordered. Be certain to check your order upon receipt and contact the Department office if there are any discrepancies. A Unit may order additional Poppies at any time, right up to Poppy Day.

Let's hope it won't be long before every Unit has ordered its 2016 small Poppies and becomes involved in one of the oldest and most widely recognized programs of the American Legion Auxiliary.

GIRLS STATE

Will your Unit be sponsoring a candidate to the 2016 session of American Legion Auxiliary Minnesota Girls State? Plans are in progress with many changes for the upcoming session. Have you contacted your local high school to begin the selection process? They are waiting to hear from you. Units should work together to make certain every school in their area is contacted and has the opportunity to have someone participate in Girls State.

Consider personal interviews, essays or speeches as ways to make your final selection. It is the Unit's responsibility, not the school's, to choose the girl who will be attending.

Remember your application for reservation and your \$300.00 registration fee must be received by March 31st to reserve a place for your American Legion Auxiliary Minnesota Girls State citizen. If your Unit has not yet sent this in, please take care of it immediately. Reservations with the payment of the \$300.00 registration fee for each candidate will be accepted on a "first-come-first served" basis. Upon processing your Unit's reservation fee you will receive the necessary registration packet for each citizen you are sponsoring. American Legion Auxiliary Minnesota Girls State can accommodate 445 citizens.

A Unit may send as many young women to American Legion Auxiliary Girls State as they wish to. The candidate must be a Minnesota resident, attend a Minnesota school or be home schooled.

The 2016 session of American Legion Auxiliary Minnesota Girls State will be held at Bethel University in St. Paul, June 12 - 18. We look forward to the 70th annual American Legion Auxiliary Minnesota Girls State week and another educational and successful session.

VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION WEEK

Has your Unit considered doing something special for those members who are active volunteers within your Unit, your community, or your District? April 10 - 16th is "National Volunteer Recognition Week," a perfect time to

Auxiliary Bulletin

Continued from Preceding Page

recognize them for their many hours of volunteer service. A certificate, coffee and cookies, or guests at a pot luck dinner are several ideas of what your Unit could do to say "thank you" for the many hours and contributions your volunteers have given in service to others. The American Legion Auxiliary has the best volunteers of any organization.

PRESIDENT'S PROJECT

Department President Sandy Fredrickson appreciates your support of her special Department President's Projects this year. Her projects are raising funds for the Minnesota Creative Arts Festival at the St. Cloud and Minneapolis VA's to help Veterans attend the Creative Arts Festival which is held annually in different states. After her goals for the part of the project are met she would like to donate to the Journeys Program which helps PTSD outpatients and also the Emergent Needs Fund at the Minneapolis VAMC. President Sandy has received many very kind donations but could still use more to reach her goals. She thanks each of you very much.

SCHOLARSHIPS

Applications for all scholarships awarded by the Department are due by March 15th. Announcement of the recipients will appear in this column when the judging is completed. Make sure and follow all of the rules on the application. We don't want our students disqualified because something isn't signed.

CHILDREN AND YOUTH MONTH

April is Children and Youth month. Plan a special program and invite your community to attend. Let them know of your involvement and concern for the youth of our nation. There are a number of programs you can present to your community.

ANNUAL REPORTS

Annual report time is fast approaching. All Units should be preparing their reports covering the time period April 1, 2015 to March 31, 2016. The white and all yellow copies of all reports must be mailed to the Department office on or before April 15th. No matter how much or how little your Unit has been able to contribute in time, energy, resources and talent to our programs, it is important that everything be included in your reports. Your reports make up our Department and National reports. You have all received your forms - let's have a 100% turn in this year. The Department Office has listened and changed the Unit forms back to the old form of reporting. We hope this will encourage more Units to fill them out.

Department citations will be awarded to all Units that have attained their Unit membership goal and have filed a complete set of annual reports by April 15th.

Certificates of Merit will be awarded to Units by various Department Chairmen based on the Unit annual reports. Membership goal is not required to be considered for a certificate of merit.

TROPHY AND AWARD ENTRIES

Entries for any trophy and award competition are due by April 15th, unless otherwise stated in the rules. Be certain to label each entry with the name of the award you are applying for. A separate entry is needed for each award unless the winning Department entry is being forwarded for National competition. See the rules for complete details.

You may apply for any award, whether your Unit has reached its membership goal or not, unless that requirement is stated in the rules. Please apply for awards - let's get the members recognition for the hard work they do for our Veterans.

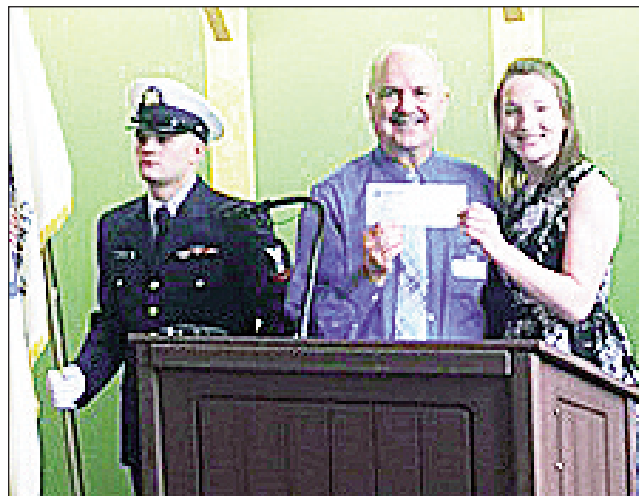
SECRETARY SANDIE'S NOTES

By the time you read this I will have returned from the Washington DC Conference. This is the first time I will be attending and hopefully will not have caused too much ruckus out there. I am thinking my help really couldn't hurt! Not much new happening - just working, eating (too much) and sleeping. I dream of a vacation coming up, but won't happen until June - again I will be sitting on the back of our Harley going to God knows where, some mountains in one of the Carolina's. I don't ask too many questions, just enjoy the scenery and pray Shorty keeps the bike on the road. We are hard at work here with Junior Conference, Girls State, Department Convention, Annual Reports and just the day to day stuff. It seems I just told Jan yesterday that this is our slow time and we should be able to breathe a bit - well Jan, I think we missed that window again this year.

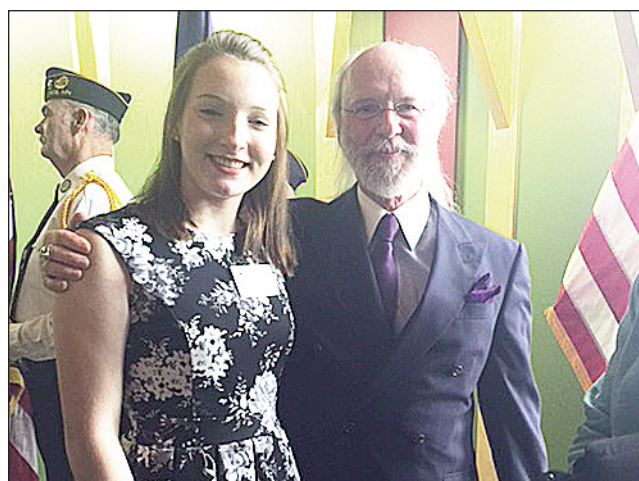
To all of you wonderful American Legion Family members, from my family to yours, have a very good, enjoyable St. Patrick's Day and also a very Happy and Blessed Easter.



MONTGOMERY UNIT 79 NEW MEMBER INITIATION -- President Sandy Fredrickson joined the Montgomery Unit 79 for their annual Sweetheart Dinner which is put on by The American Legion Post 79 members to show their appreciation for all the Auxiliary does for them. Front row, from left: New Members Kayla Bartusek, Amanda Lutz, Nikki Weitbrecht, Shirley Pumper, Darlene Dietz. Back Row: Initiating Officers Jean Keogh, Jeanette Kukacka, Department President Sandy Fredrickson, Unit 79 President Darlene Wondra, Marilyn Prchal and Linda Ruhland.



DEDICATION AT VETS CEMETERY -- Honorary Junior President Bryce Soltis presented a \$1,500 check to Little Falls Mayor Greg Zylka at the dedication of the new mural at the committal service building. The mural was her president's project.



NEW MURAL -- Honorary Junior President Bryce Soltis met the artist of the new mural at the Minnesota Veterans Cemetery at Camp Ripley, Charles Kapsner.

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Feb. 16, 2016, Auxiliary Membership

District	Goal	Membership To Date	Percent of Goal	Membership Last Year
One	6,146	4,465	69.09%	4,670
Two	5,979	4,445	71.37%	4,556
Three	5,323	3,933	69.53%	4,085
Four	920	636	59.67%	669
Five	1,047	733	65.81%	776
Six	7,318	5,568	70.99%	5,650
Seven	4,859	3,556	68.55%	3,696
Eight	2,005	1,395	63.29%	1,502
Nine	5,232	3,939	71.88%	4,027
Ten	6,382	4,610	63.93%	4,799
1982	198	150	64.14%	123
Totals	45,409	33,430	68.74%	34,553

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July 28-August 4, 2016

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- Delta Air Flights between Minneapolis to Anchorage
- 7 nights accommodations
- 12 meals: 7 breakfasts, 4 lunches, 1 dinner (including an Alaskan Salmon Bake)
- Iditarod Travel Headquarters
- Travel the Alaska Railroad
- Denali Park Natural History Tour
- Riverboat Discovery Cruise
- Chena Indian Village
- Prince William Sound Cruise
- Meares Glacier

\$3,429.00
Per Person Double Occupancy

New York City & New England/Canada Cruise

September 22-October 1, 2016

Tour Includes:

- 4-Seasons Tour Director, Larry Alvey
- Roundtrip Delta Flights from Minneapolis New York City
- All transfers to and from the airport and pier
- 2 nights stay at the Millennium Broadway Hotel in Times Square New York
- Circle Line Cruise of Manhattan with lunch
- The Broadway performance, "Aladdin"
- A 7 night cruise on the Regal Princess
- Cruise gratuities
- Luggage handling at hotel and on the ship

PASSPORTS REQUIRED

Starting at **\$2,999.00**
Per Person Double Occupancy

Tulip Time - Holland, MI

May 11-15, 2016

Tour Includes:

- 4-Seasons Tour Director, Jenny Gilbertson
- 4 nights accommodations
- 8 meals: 4 breakfasts, 2 lunches, 2 dinners
- Nelis' Dutch Village
- Veldheer's Tulip Farm
- "The Wonder Bread Years" show
- Tulip Time Tour
- Windmill Island Gardens
- Comedian Bill Engvall
- Dutch Marktplaats
- Muziekparade

\$999.00
Per Person Double Occupancy

Alaska Tour & Cruise

July 21-August 4, 2016

Fairbanks-Denali National Park-Anchorage-Hubbard Glacier-Glacier Bay-Skagway-Juneau-Ketchikan-Inside Passage-Vancouver

Tour Includes:

- 4-Seasons Tour Director Larry Alvey
- Roundtrip Delta flights from Minneapolis to Fairbanks and return from Vancouver to Minneapolis
- All sightseeing and entrance fees as outlined in the itinerary
- A 7-night southbound cruise on the ISLAND PRINCESS
- Cruise Gratuities
- All meals and entertainment while onboard the ISLAND PRINCESS
- Pre night hotel in Fairbanks
- Post night hotel in Vancouver with city tour

PASSPORTS REQUIRED

Starting at **\$4,299.00**
Per Person Double Occupancy

Albuquerque Balloon Fiesta

September 28-October 5, 2016

Tour Includes:

- 4-Seasons Tour Director, Jenny Gilbertson
- 7 nights accommodations
- Deluxe motor coach transportation
- 10 meals: 7 breakfasts, 1 lunch, 2 dinners
- Mass Ascension at the Balloon Fiesta
- Glowdeo at the Balloon Fiesta
- Tour of Old Town
- Route 66
- Indian Pueblo Cultural Center
- Tour of Santa Fe via the Turquoise Trail National Scenic Byway
- Stops in Chimayo, NM and Pueblo, CO

\$1,799.00
Per Person Double Occupancy

New York City Tour

June 22-26, 2016

Tour Includes:

- 4-Seasons Tour Manager Larry Alvey
- Roundtrip Delta airlines flights from Minneapolis to New York City
- 4 night stay at the Hotel at Times Square
- Two Broadway musicals, Aladdin and Wicked
- Lunch at Carmine's
- Manhattan Island City Tour
- 9/11 Memorial and Museum
- Harbor Cruise with lunch
- Daily continental breakfast
- Luggage handling for one suitcase

\$2,399.00
Per Person Double Occupancy

Mackinac Island & Door County

July 10-16, 2016

Tour Includes:

- 4-Seasons Tour Director, Joyce Langerud
- Deluxe motor coach transportation
- 6 nights accommodations
- 12 meals: 6 breakfasts, 4 lunches, 2 dinners
- Guided tour of Door County and Mackinaw City
- Carriage ride on Mackinac Island
- Soo Locks Cruise Tour
- Fish Boil in Door County
- Gordon Lightfoot Musical Show
- Great Lakes Shipwreck Museum
- Luggage handling for one suitcase

\$1,099.00
Per Person Double Occupancy

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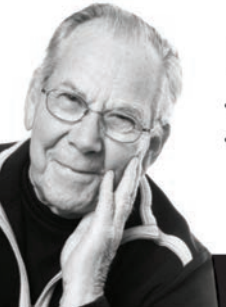
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