Mostly quiet year seen on legislative front

By Al Zdon

It looks to be another fairly quiet year for veterans’ legislation, much like last year. But there’s always the chance for some controversy, much like last year. Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs Legislative Director Mike McElhinney said there have been great gains and changes in the last many years, and the agency is not proposing big changes this time around.

“We’re not pushing too hard for anything. We’re still soaking up all the things in the last four years. We want to be operationally sound rather than seeking a bunch of new legislation.”

Department Adjunct Randy Tesdahl, who coordinates much of The American Legion’s lobbying effort, also said this will probably not be a watershed year.

“It seems pretty quiet to start. Maybe it’s because there’s a surplus. Maybe because there has been a shift in leadership, and maybe just plain and simply because must everything is going pretty darn good.”

Tesdahl said the veterans’ programs in Minnesota are recognized as some of the best in the nation. That doesn’t mean there will not be ongoing debate on some ongoing issues. For instance, two bills have already been introduced to add another veterans nursing home in the state.

The Minnesota Veterans Homes is a group of five nursing facilities across the state aimed at bringing first class care to veterans and spouses. There has been movement in recent years to add a sixth or seventh home to the mix. This year, so far, legislation has been introduced to approve bonding for homes in Bemidji and Montevideo. Potential sites for new homes also include Willmar and Brainerd. McElhinney said the legislation is concerned, however, about the ongoing costs of veterans homes. “The costs continue to go up. We are on the cutting-edge of patient-centered care at our veterans homes.”

Finding money to build a new veterans home is one Continued on Page 2

Legion compliments DoD on opening its bases to VSOs

WASHINGTON – National Commander Mike Helm praised Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel’s recent directives for military commanders to be more welcoming of non-profit groups that wish to provide support for troops and their families.

“Secretary Hagel has broken through the bureaucratic walls that Legionnaires sometimes face when they try to access military bases so they could provide needed support for troops and their families,” Helm said.

“The Legion has approximately 3,000 accredited service officers that are eager to assist troops access the benefits they have earned.”

“Additionally, we have outstanding support programs such as Operation Comfort Warriors for wounded, injured or ill troops, job placement, transition assistance, a family support network and many other initiatives adopted by American Legion posts throughout the United States and overseas.

“With frequent personnel changes on military installations, some base commanders haven’t had the opportunities to establish long-term relationships with the Legion and were uninformied of our intentions and the services that we provide.”

“Secretary Hagel has taken measures that re-emphasize the importance of military installations to standardize our procedures and grant greater access consistent with their mission requirements.”

In a letter to American Legion National Security Director John Stovall, Hagel said, “I want to express my deep appreciation for the wise counsel and support you and your organization have provided during my tenure as Secretary of Defense.

“Our many roundtable meetings and other engagements gave me valuable insights and thoughtful perspectives into how our Department can best address the needs of our service members, veterans and families.”

Hagel issued two directives to each of the military services, one calling for greater access and support services to “VA-recognized Veteran Service and Military Service Organizations” and another calling for access and support services to “Nonprofit Non-federal entities.”

Continued on Page 2
Minnesota Legislative session underway

Continued from Page 1

thing, but keeping it running at a high level is another thing.

The issue became more cloudy with the formation of a new committee in the House on long-term care across the state. A $250,000 grant has been established for five entities in the state to look at the future of nursing care facilities.

The committee will not strictly look at veterans’ care, but it will be in the mix, McElhiney said. There has been a push with some legislators to provide veterans care at existing nursing facilities rather than build more homes.

The committee will report back to the legislature in time for the 2017 session.

Tesdahl said that the state spent a lot of money and time to develop a report on where new veterans homes might be built. “Let’s use that information to the overall benefit of Minnesota veterans. Don’t let that information just sit on a shelf.”

The Commander’s Task Force has recommended eight legislative priorities for this session. (See story on Page 3.) “The overall message is one of maintenance,” Tesdahl said.

“Let’s use that information to the overall benefit of Minnesota veterans. Don’t let that information just sit on a shelf.”

Several Virginia-class subs in 2020. All future submarines will be designed for integrated crews, the Navy has said.

The Navy has described the integration process as smooth, although a recent episode aboard the Ohio-class USS Wyoming raises questions about that. The Navy investigated 12 petty officers for sharing and watching a video of a female officer showering aboard the submarine, according to the report.

Connor, the submarine force commander, has said two more fast-attack subs will be integrated next fiscal year, this time in the Pacific. The Minnesota and Virginia are ported in Groton, Conn.

Subs to have women aboard

Continued from Page 1

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We also want to promote educational needs, housing and job creation. “Minnesota has paid a huge price in our recent wars, and we need to make sure those returning from action don’t merely just return home — we need to bring them all the way home to welcoming homes, supportive communities, well-paying jobs, and good, accessible health care.”

McElhiney said the expansion of the Minnesota GI Bill would be a great improvement for veterans. The new bill would allow veterans to use Minnesota GI Bill money to pay for application fees, exams, licensing or other certification.

It would also allow veterans who do not plan to use the GI Bill themselves to have spouses or children to use it. One major issue from the past that will not be an issue this time around is finding for the final phase of construction at the Minnesota Veterans Home at Minneapolis. The state is still in construction of Phase II of the project, creating a new Building 17 north.

The news is that the project is now fully funded, with the federal government coming through this past summer with the matching funds for the money the state had put up.

One other bill that has been introduced that may again stir some controversy is the “Honor and Remember Flag.” The bill would allow for some recognition of the flag and authorize its use on public buildings. The American Legion and other veterans service organizations have opposed the bill, saying the flag is unnecessary and that its copyright is owned by a private organization.

Tesdahl said there are great hopes the session will be non-partisan on veterans issues.

“I find it very interesting that both sides talk about the need for compromise and cooperation, yet the other day at a veterans committee hearing so many insisted on wearing their ‘colors.’ I have never seen so many bright red or bright blue ties,” Tesdahl said.

“Some would say, ‘I’m just wearing my team’s colors.’ Well, I would say, if you’re on a veterans committee, your colors are red, white and blue.”

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Dignity Planning
The CTF announces agenda for 2015 session

**Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs**

**Funding suggestions:** The CTF urges lawmakers to continue to support and fund MDVA as the nation enters its 14th year of war fighting and the re-evaluation of the Federal VA issues unfound, the role and mission of the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs has never been more important. The CTF urges, the legislature to place priority on MDVA and to enable them through proper funding, the flexibility to support veterans as needed.

The CTF has pushed the recent evolution of the department since the merger of its Programs and Services Division with the Veterans Homes in 2007. Many necessary improvements have taken place; however, it is the estimate of the CTF that more are needed to ensure effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability into the future. The CTF believes there is still room for improvement in the realm of professional staffing throughout the agency. The CTF supports MDVA’s workforce development plans, full funding for the Little Falls Cemetery and ongoing maintenance funding for all its buildings.

**Guardianship Program Removal from MN Statute**

The CFT supports the removal of the Guardianship Program that is contained in MN Statute. The Guardianship program allows for a district court to appoint the Commissioner of Veterans Affairs as guardian of the estate of a veteran or dependent if necessary. The Commissioner manages the accounts and all transactions that occur under the authority of guardianship. At its height, the program had 3 full-time employees and 1 full-time clerical staff person.

The agency was allowed to take a 5% fee on the income of any court-appointed client (averaging $25-$35K per client/month). However, as non-court-appointed cases grew more common, the program became unsustainable due to a decrease in incoming fees. The guardianship program accepted its last clients in 2004, and the last cases were reassigned between 2005 and 2006, effectively shutting the program.

Removing the program from MN Statute would eliminate an unneeded service, and allow the Department of Veterans Affairs to clean the books in order to best serve the state’s veteran population. Veterans or families in need of help to manage their estates may do so by seeking a private fiduciary.

**July Hire a Veteran Month**

July is suggested that the month of July would better accommodate the theme of hiring veterans.

Removing distractions and prior engagements would allow state and private events and promotions to be more visible, and therefore more successful in the end goal of helping veterans gain employment.

Amend the “Support Our Troops” Fund

The CFT supports expanding authorized uses of the Support Our Troops Fund and placing the funds in an account that accrues interest. This proposal would amend MN Statute to provide MDVA grant-making authority and reclassify the fund account type. This is funding achieved through the sale of license plates, collected by the Department of Transportation, split between MDVA and the Department of Military Affairs (DFA) and then transferred to the respective agencies. MDVA would like to broaden eligibility criteria for whom it may award SOT grants. This would allow MDVA to award the Support Our Troops license plate funds through grants to veterans groups and agencies that work with or represent those disabled veterans legitimate and worthy of assistance. Additionally, MDVA would like the account type reclassified to 2304 (Gift and Donations) funds in order to accrue interest on the balance.

Currently, the requirements for SOT fund awards are limited by their amount, and to whom they may be awarded. Additionally, the statute provides for four ways in which the funds can be disbursed/ used within MDVA. Outside of the approved options, there are many outstanding causes that these funds could be used for. As was the original intent and development of the fund, the account should be used for as many veteran needs/issues/programming in Minnesota as the Commissioner deems appropriate.

**Vehicle Reg. Tax Exemption for Disabled Veterans**

The CTF supports a vehicle registration tax exemption for 100% service connected veterans. This proposal would amend MN Statute in order to exempt 100% service connected veterans from paying the registration fee. Disabled veterans who are 100% service connected often require modified vehicles in order to conduct daily living and working areas. By allowing a 100% rating, those veterans are often at a disadvantage with their healthy counterparts.

The CFT believes the best way to implement this is to have MDVA certify the 100% service connection, and in doing so, it could count the number of recipients. That way, MDVA could be better informed of the impact. This would help health providers. Currently, paying for school expenses, exams, licensing, or other certifications and expenses accrued in the process of self-betterment. Secondly, the proposal would allow benefits to be transferred to a spouse or children of an eligible veteran. Broadening the approved use of the Minnesota GI Bill would add value to Minnesota communities, and promote the welfare of veterans and their families.

**Amend Explicated Licensing for Veterans & Spouses**

The CTF supports amending MN Statute 197.452. This proposal would amend MN Statute concerning veteran and veteran spouse expedited licensing by including the definition of “veteran” (as per M.S. 197.447), and clarifying that veteran spouse expedited licensing by including the definition of “veteran” (as per M.S. 197.447), and clarifying that the veteran spouse expedited licensing does not represent a substitute for regular licensing. Additionally, the statute provides for four ways in which the federal government may provide service to veterans to honor them for their bravery and sacrifice to our country.

**Soldier’s Wish**

The American Legion offers grants to help soldiers, their spouses and families in need of assistance.

**American Legion ‘official sponsor of Tree Town Festival’**

Forest City, Iowa – Tree Town Music Festival has announced that the nation’s largest wartime veterans organization, The American Legion, will once again serve as the official charity of The Tree Town Music Festival, which is fast becoming the largest of its kind.

In 2014, thousands of fans descended on Forest City, Iowa, for the first-year Memorial Day weekend event to catch performances by some of country music’s biggest stars, including Brad Paisley, Toby Keith, Bradenton Gilbert, Chris Young, Scotty McCreery and more.

For the second year, American Legion service officers from Iowa and Minnesota will be onsite to meet with veterans and their families to help them with their Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) benefits and issues. In addition to veterans, groups and support networks who have proved themselves well-trained experts in VA programs and services. Soldier’s Wish will also be in attendance, granting wishes to soldiers, veterans and their families in an act of honor to them for their bravery and sacrifice to our country.

The continued support of Tree Town Music Festival is a great display of patriotism,” said Ron Strable, Department Commander for The American Legion of Iowa. “We look forward to spending the weekend lending up to nearly 100 veterans and families from across the country.”

Tree Town Music Festival is bringing the hottest rising stars and established hit-makers in music to Forest City, Iowa, during Memorial Day Weekend 2015. The newly-expanded four-day event will feature performances by Blake Shelton, Dierks Bentley, Rascal Flatts, Lee Brice, Eli Young Band, Thomas Rhett, Chase Rice, Maddie & Tae, Danielle Bradbery, Old Dominion, Casey Muesmigmann, The Last Ride, Joe Denim, Heartland, Willie Nelson, Casting Crowns and many more.

Single-day tickets are now available for $35 for Thursday and $80 for Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Four-day passes are available for $150. Whether you have a two-person tent or jumbo home on wheels, Tree Town Music Festival has campsite options to meet your needs. For more info on ticketing, camping or for more information on Tree Town Music Festival needs, please visit: treetownfestival.com or call 877-569-7767.

By Steve Klinkner

As I sit by the computer thinking what to write, my first thoughts come to me as I am so grateful to be able to write about when I became a District Commander. I attended the past Second District Commander Donald Hansen’s funeral, a true gentleman, and I could not help but think about Don’s life and what he did for the veterans and the military community as a whole. It was as if I could see him standing tall and saluting those that were not with us anymore. He was a true friend and mentor to so many. He was always there for everyone. He was always willing to help when you needed it. He was always there when you needed him. He was always there to show that kindness and respect to everyone. It is truly a loss for the veterans and the military community. It is truly a loss for everyone. It is truly a loss for me. It is truly a loss for the world.

On the morning of February 3, 1943, the U.S.A.T. Dorchester was sunk by a German U-Boat. Most of the 900 troops on board were ashore in their bunks. Suddenly a torpedo smashed into the Dorchester’s flank. From there on out, it was just a matter of time. The Dorchester quickly slipped off their own precious life preservers, put them on young GI’s and told them to jump. The Dorchester went down 25 minutes later in a rumble of steel and water. The Dorchester was lost, but the lives of many were saved. The Dorchester had saved over 200. The last anyone saw of them, they were standing on the slanting deck, their arms linked in prayer to the one God they all served.

In the heart of Philadelphia, the Chapel opens its doors to children and adults alike of all faiths and creeds for a special event to be held rial to the Four Chaplains who went down on the U.S.A.T. Dorchester. It is an interfaith shi ne; in it are three altars, one for each faith. Each altar will have a special focus. The altar will be for the children of all faiths that all could worship God in a spirit of unity. In the heart of Philadelphia, the Chapel opens its doors to children and adults alike of all faiths and creeds for a special event to be held rial to the Four Chaplains who went down on the U.S.A.T. Dorchester. It is an interfaith shi ne; in it are three altars, one for each faith. Each altar will have a special focus. The altar will be for the children of all faiths that all could worship God in a spirit of unity. In the heart of Philadelphia, the Chapel opens its doors to children and adults alike of all faiths and creeds for a special event to be held rial to the Four Chaplains who went down on the U.S.A.T. Dorchester. It is an interfaith shi ne; in it are three altars, one for each faith. Each altar will have a special focus. The altar will be for the children of all faiths that all could worship God in a spirit of unity. In the heart of Philadelphia, the Chapel opens its doors to children and adults alike of all faiths and creeds for a special event to be held rial to the Four Chaplains who went down on the U.S.A.T. Dorchester. It is an interfaith shi ne; in it are three altars, one for each faith. Each altar will have a special focus. The altar will be for the children of all faiths that all could worship God in a spirit of unity. In the heart of Philadelphia, the Chapel opens its doors to children and adults alike of all faiths and creeds for a special event to be held rial to the Four Chaplains who went down on the U.S.A.T. Dorchester. It is an interfaith shi ne; in it are three altars, one for each faith. Each altar will have a special focus. The altar will be for the children of all faiths that all could worship God in a spirit of unity.

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Al Zdon, Editor

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What’s Happening

Coast Guard Reunion
The third annual Coast Guard Reunion will be held at the Hopkins VFW Post on June 20. It will begin at 11 a.m. with lunch at noon. All Coast Guard veterans and those currently serving are welcome.

For more information, contact Chris Kalogerson at chriskalogerson@gmail.com or 952-935-9065.

Round Tables
The Fort Snelling World War II History Round Table will feature “Italian Struggle,” about the brutal combat fighting involving the 6th Marine and fighting that began in the campaign from Salerno to Rome. Army Tim Brady, author of “A Death in San Pietro” will speak as will combat veterans of the Italian Front.

The meeting will be held on Thursday, Feb. 12, at the Fort Snelling History Center at 7 p.m. Admission is $5, and free for students.

The Rochester Veterans Round Table will be “Fighting in the South Pacific and Returning a Japanese Sword,” featuring Orville Amahl and Ron Amahl. The meeting will be held at Autumn Ridge Church at 7 p.m. on Monday, Feb. 9, with a $5 admission.

The St. Croix Valley Civil War Round Table will meet on Feb. 23 at the Lowell Inn in Stillwater, and the subject “Fort Snelling and the Civil War” will be discussed with guest Steve Osman. Contact Steve Anderson at 715-386-1268 for more information.

Commander’s Testimonial
The Testimonial Dinner for Department Commander Peggi Jacobson will be held at the Northern Lights Casino in Walker on Saturday, March 21.

The featured speaker for the event will be Past National Commander Butch Miller of Virginia.

The event will be open with a social hour at 5:30 p.m. with dinner and the testimonial program to follow at 6:30.

The cost is $25 per person, and dinner reservations should be sent to “Commander Peggy’s Testimonial,” Kriesel-Jacobson Post 560, Box 123, Zimmerman, MN 55398. Reservations must be received no later than March 10.

Rooms at the Northern Lights are blocked out under “Commander’s Dinner.” For room reservations, call 1-866-652-4683.

Other hotels in the area include the Country Inn and suites, 218-547-1400 or the America’s Best Value, 218-547-652-4683.

Tree Seedling Purchase
Information on specifics and prices for purchasing tree seedlings will be mailed to the posts in January. That information will also be available on the Department of Minnesota website, minlegion.org at a future date.

“It’s never too early to be thinking about purchasing tree seedlings from The American Legion,” said Energy and Conservation Chairman Earl Hendrickson. “Spring will be here sooner than you think.”

For more information, call Hendrickson at 218-393-0079.

Tour of WWII Italy
The World War II History Round Table will be sponsoring a tour to Italy in May. It will depart on May 20 for Rome and include three days there. Memorial day will be at the Anzio Military Cemetery before traveling to Salerno.

Thank You
It’s not always easy with the loss of a loved one. The American Legion Family with the cards, prayers and thoughts have made the loss less painful. We know she is in God’s hand and with dad, enjoying no more pain. Thank you all.

Families of Ruth Goede
Bill, Jean, Julie

Thank you all for your prayers during my recent accident. American Legion Family is the best. Thanks also to the King Tuts for the flowers. Also, Nurse Marie for being there.

Bill Goede
Past Department Commander

Jeff Olson elected to AZ HOF
Former Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs Commissioner Jeff Olson has been elected to the Arizona Veterans Hall of Fame.

Olson, who was born in Spring Grove in 1949 and lived for many years in Mabel and Stillwater, has been living in Green Valley, Ariz., for several years.

Olson served in the Army Courier Service from 1973-1976 and is a Vietnam Veteran.

He served as assistant director of Veterans Employment and Training Service at the University of Minnesota before being appointed as Deputy Commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs in 1982.

He took over as commissioner in 2000.

Before and after retirement, he was very active in The American Legion at all levels.

He served as chairman of the Legion’s National Convention Corporation for many years, organizing and preparing for the Legion’s annual national meeting.

He is presently the national commander’s representative on the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission. In 2009, he was appointed by the Arizona governor to the Arizona Veterans Service Advisory Commission and has served as chairman.

He also continues to serve as chairman of the Resolutions Assignment Committee of the Minnesota American Legion. He also heads up a committee looking at the celebration of Minnesota’s Legion centennial.

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Waseca Vets Memorial
The new Waseca County Veterans Memorial will complement the existing memorial at the courthouse. It will recognize those serving from World War II to the present. Donations are being accepted and veterans may be recognized with the purchase of a plaque for the memorial. For more information, including forms, see www.wasecaveteransmemorial.org.

Legal Clinics
MACV will sponsor legal clinics at the Anoka County Government Center on Tuesday, Feb. 10, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., and at the Minneapolis VA Medical Center on Tuesday, Feb. 3, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. in the Flag Atrium Balcony.

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February 2015 Minnesota Legionnaire Page 5
By Al Zdon

Verndale was a bustling little community in north central Minnesota in 1883, with a population nearing 600 and two grain elevators and a grist mill to keep the economy humming.

On May 25, James and Clara McNair brought a baby boy into the world and named him Lesley. The proud father was a merchant in the community, operating a general store on the main street of Verndale.

The growing little town was probably a great place for a young lad to grow up. Many of the local men were Civil War veterans. In fact, over 100 Verndale families could claim at least one Civil War soldier as a son or father.

Young Lesley graduated from ninth grade in 1897, and his parents moved the family to Minneapolis where the lad could finish his high school years. He was very bright, and when he did graduate he had his heart set on becoming a naval officer.

He won an appointment to the Naval Academy, but at that time there was a long waiting list of candidates. For a time, he attended the Minnesota School of Business, but when he graduated in 1900, he was still on the Navy's waiting list. Discouraged, young McNair instead applied to the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. He was accepted for that year.

Four years later, he graduated 11th in his class of 124 cadets and was commissioned as a second lieutenant. During his time at West Point, he earned a reputation as a mathematical genius, and he gained the nickname, “Whitey,” which would follow him the rest of his life.

His first duty was with a field artillery unit in Fort Douglas, Utah. He spent the next 35 years or so mostly with artillery and ordnance commands. In 1905, he married his sweetheart, Claire Huster, and they had one son, Douglas.

With the Great War raging in Europe, the United States got involved in Mexico in two incidents. McNair joined the 4th Field Artillery when it was assigned to occupy the Mexican port city of Vera Cruz as part of the 5th Reinforced Brigade. The U.S. was protecting American oil interests in the area, and occupied the town for seven months.

McNair was back in Texas when Mexican bandit Pancho Villa staged a raid into Columbus, New Mexico, in 1916 killing 19 Americans and burning the town. President Wilson ordered a “Punitive Expedition” and sent Major General John Pershing to lead 4,800 men into Mexico to find and destroy Villa’s paramilitary forces and capture Villa.

McNair, now a captain, commanded the 4th Field Artillery as part of the U.S. forces that plunged 300 miles into Mexico, not only taking on Villa’s forces, but also those of the Mexican government. Gen. George Patton also served in the expedition. After mixed results, negotiations ended the expedition in January, 1917 — just in time to get ready for the World War.

In May, 1917, McNair was promoted to major and sent to France as part of the U.S. First Infantry Division. His job was to train the artillerists, and his good work caused him to shoot up through the ranks. He became a temporary one-star general in October, 1918, just before the war’s end. He was the youngest general officer in the Army at that time at the age of 35.

With the war over, McNair reverted to his permanent rank of major and returned to the U.S. Between wars he held a variety of positions including becoming a professor of military science and tactics at Purdue University for four years. He also was involved in several training commands, and earned a reputation along those lines.

By 1937, he had worked his way up to brigadier general, and by 1940, he was a major general and had advanced to the position of commandant of the General Staff College where he made changes that helped prepare the graduates for the rigors of the new world war.

He was Chief of Staff of the General Headquarters of the Army from 1940 until 1942 when General George Marshall appointed him the commanding general of the Army Ground Forces.

It was a daunting job. America was poorly prepared for war, and now had to make up for lost time. McNair’s responsibility was to develop a training regimen for three million soldiers, taking them from farmers and gas station attendants and soda jerks to professional soldiers — in a hurry. He used large-scale maneuvers in Louisiana and North Carolina to get the army ready.

The maneuvers were as authentic as McNair could make

Editor’s Note:
This is the first of a planned series of stories that will look at some of the extraordinary people from Minnesota who served in the military through the years. The occasional stories will take a historical look at their lives. If you have some one you think should be in this series, please email Legionnaire Editor Al Zdon at azdon@mnlegion.org.
General Marshall: McNair was the ‘brains of the Army’

them, and he later wrote, “The truth is sought regardless of whether pleasant or unpleasant, or whether it supports or contradicts present policy and doctrine.” He con-
cluded, “The principal obstacle now is that commanders lack either the guts or the discernment to act.”

Around this time, just before Pearl Harbor, a story in the
Fayetteville, N.C., Observer, tried to capture the essence of McNair’s leadership by this time had earned his third star. The report
ner noted that McNair did not strut or make a show of his
rank, and that the only way he could be differentiated from
the soldiers he commanded were the three stars on his
shoulders.

“His spirit,” the reporter said, “is that of a man who might be
selected in the event the United States should become
involved in the present war, to lead our fighting forces,
through a thought he expects you can’t inveigle such a
suggestion from the general himself.”

The story said McNair talked, “in the easy, slow drawl of
the westerner. And when he gives orders, they are obeyed.”

McNair and Marshall, the chief of the Army, were said to be
close friends, the story said. “Each has a sincere regard for the
abilities of the other,” the story noted.

A booklet on McNair’s life, published in 1976, further
talked about his personality and publicity and praise. When
his picture was put up at the war college, he ordered it taken
down. He is reported to have said, “They can put it up when
I’m dead if they want to.” And that’s exactly what
happened.

Marshall reportedly called him the “brains of the Army.”

“He is the kind of man, you think you would be a fool to
deny a stall to find out for himself what it was like to dig a foxhole.
When he did an inspection of a camp he would first go to the
kitchen and sample the food, “knowing that health and morale center
around good food.”

He cared little for protocol, and instructed his staff: “They are
my subordinates, not my intimates. So don’t make a big deal about
published and personal praise. When his picture was put up at
the war college, he ordered it taken down. He is reported to have
said, “They can put it up when I’m dead if they want to.” And that’s exactly
what happened.

Marshall reportedly called him the “brains of the Army.”

“His real purpose was, once the invasion was underway:
“Operation Cobra,” a major effort to break out and take
the war to Germany.

While McNair was credited with building an army
that won wars on both sides of the world, his untimely
death left him unable to personally defend himself against
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With D-Day approaching in 1944, McNair requested a
transfer to England to take command of an army.

Eisenhower partially granted his wish by putting him in
charge of an army that didn’t exist. Like his longtime peer,
Gen. Patton, who was now in disgrace after the slapping
incident in Italy, McNair was put in charge of a non-existent
army. His phantom army was to invade France at the Pas de
Calais, and was a diversion from the actual Allied attack at
Normandy.

His real purpose was, once the invasion was underway,
to again go to the front and find out firsthand how the
war was going. Training and preparation of American soldier was
holding up in combat conditions.

It was in this role that General McNair was in a slit
trench near the city of St. Lo on July 25, 1944. The
American forces had been bottled up in the Normandy
northwest, and General Bradley and others had conceived
of “Operation Cobra,” a major effort to break out and take
the war to Germany.

The first part of Cobra was a massive carpet bombing of
the German positions by the Air Forces.

Correspondent Ernie Pyle describes with some horror
what transpired on that day as the bombing continued: “As
we watched, there crept into our consciousness a realization
that the windows of exploding bombs were easing back
toward us, flight by flight, instead of gradually forward, as
the plan called for. Then, we were horrified by the suspicion
that those machines, high in the sky and completely
detached from us, were aiming their bombs at the smoke
line on the ground — and a gently breeze was drifting the
smoke back over us.”

In the end, over 100 U.S. troops were killed by our
bombers that day. Bradley himself later recounted the
tragedy in gruesome detail:

“The ground belched, shook and spat dirt to the sky.
Scores of our troops were hit, their bodies flung from slit
trenches. Doughboys were dashed and frightened...A bomb
landed squarely on McNair in a slit trench and threw his
body sixty feet and mangled it beyond recognition except
for the three stars on his collar.”

McNair was 61 years old.

Eisenhower in a letter to General Montgomery said, “His
death cast a gloom over all who had known the most able
and devoted officer.”

McNair was buried in the American Cemetery at
Normandy and his body was never brought back to the
United States. In 1954, Congress passed an act that granted
him, posthumously, the rank of four-star general. He is the
highest ranking American to be buried at the cemetery.

Along with lieutenant generals Frank Maxwell Andrews,
Simon Bolivar Buckner Jr. and Millard Harmon, McNair
was the highest ranking American to be killed during the
war.

Two weeks after McNair’s death, his son, Colonel
Douglas McNair, who was chief of staff of the 2nd
Division, was killed by a sniper’s bullet on Guam. He was
buried at the Punchbowl in Hawaii.

In 1945, the Army honored him by renaming a post
just outside Washington D.C. as Fort Lesly J. McNair.
The fort has been the headquarters of the Army’s military
district of Washington since 1966 and it is home to the
National Defense University.

While McNair was credited with building an army
that won wars on both sides of the world, his untimely
death left him unable to personally defend himself against
many of the military critics after the war.

In recent years, though, with the passage of time,
McNair has once again begun to get the praise and recogni-
tion for his key role during the war.

In 2012, a historian Mark Calhoun wrote in a doctoral
paper:

“Contrary to many critical analyses, McNair developed
a remarkably accurate concept of modern warfare. In
chronicling the problems that fell within his span of control, McNair
provided invaluable service to the nation in preparing the Army to
fight in the conditions he anticipated they would face. In doing so, he
established the model for the Army training system that is still in use
today.”

Calhoun noted that many historians after World War II
have argued that America won the wars primarily through
its industrial might. Calhoun disagrees:

“Rather, they did so by relying on the fundamentals
McNair helped to develop throughout the interwar period,
ideas about how to fight and win wars which the Army
incorporated into its 1941 doctrine, and which McNair
instilled in the psyche of the American soldier by leading
the most effective pre-war mobilization training effort the
nation has ever implemented.

Historian Mark Blackburn wrote:

“The new view of American combat performance in
World War II highlights how adaptive and innovative Americans
were in the European and Pacific theaters. While the resources available
to the United States and its allies played a large role in victory, a newer
understanding of American tactics emphasizes the manner in
which these resources were used. His pivotal influence
on the formation of the U.S. Army during World War II
is finally being recognized.

“McNair’s untimely death obscured his vital role for too
long.”

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McNair, wearing his Purple Heart and with his arm
buckled into his shirt, posed after being wounded in
North Africa in 1942.

McNair liked to visit the front lines to see how the train-
ing he devised was holding up in wartime conditions.

Gen. Omar Bradley points at a map as McNair listens
during maneuvers in Louisiana in 1942.
By Al Zdon

Although the war brings out different things in different people, to see Don Johnson now, a gentle man in his 90s who often softly whistles to himself, it’s a little difficult to see the Don Johnson of 70 years ago, all five-feet-seven of him, roaring down roads in Belgium and Germany as an ambulance driver.

But that’s what he did, and he did it well, earning a Bronze Star along the way.

“I wasn’t a very good soldier, but I did what I had to do to get by.”

Johnson was born and raised in Red Wing, the son of a men’s clothing store owner. He graduated from Red Wing High School in 1941 and headed off to the University of Minnesota.

“I remember we were in the State Theater in Minneapolis on Dec. 7, 1941. I can’t remember what the movie was, but they stopped the movie and the manager came out in front of the screen and said Pearl Harbor had been bombed. We didn’t really understand at first because no one had ever heard of Pearl Harbor.”

He said many Americans were still hopeful to that point that America would not get caught up in the world war. “I know I didn’t want to go to war.”

Johnson was able to stay out of the draft with his student deferment until mid-1943 when Uncle Sam finally called. He joined the 99th Infantry Division at Camp Maxey in Texas. In the wink of an eye, Johnson was in getting off the boat in England. He was a medic from the walking wounded.

For a time, he drove wounded soldiers to various aid stations and hospitals in England. At the beginning of November, the 99th Division was sent to France and ordered to take its place in the line of battle.

“We had to drive a couple of days to get to the Siegfried Line.”

The 99th was being sent to what was considered a quiet area on the northern shoulder of the attack.

On that day, Johnson was transporting two American soldiers and one German prisoner to a regimental medical collection area at Malmedy, Belgium. It was 13 miles from the front.

He was told he could stay the night at the field hospital, but he wanted to get back to his unit. “That’s where I made my big mistake. If I would have stayed where I was, I would have missed the whole thing.”

It wasn’t an easy trip back.

“I came to a crossroads northeast of Malmedy and there was a column of American tanks and trucks and everything else crossing the road in front of us going west. The column just went on forever. We thought we’d never get across.”

What Johnson didn’t know at that moment was that the long column was the U.S. Army in retreat.

He finally was able to cross the road and returned to his unit at Krinkelt, Belgium.

The first casualty in Johnson’s war was the orderly assigned to his ambulance. He was a medic from Pennsylvania. “He just lost his mind on the first day of battle. He was totally out of it. The sergeant just put his overcoat around the guy. He just stood there.”

There had been some shelling coming into Krinkelt the day before, but on Dec. 17 all hell broke loose. “The Germans threw everything at us, and they knew the country better than we did.”

The advancing German army quickly surrounded the two towns of Krinkelt and Rocherath and the Americans were under attack from both shelling and small arms fire.

“None of us had been in combat before. The called our division the “Battle Babies.” Quite a few of us gathered in the basement of a church to hide from the shelling. There were probably a hundred soldiers in that church.”

If Johnson thought he was going to stay out of the bombardment, he was quickly disabused about that line of thought. “A first lieutenant came into the basement of the church and yelled, ‘Whose ambulance is that out there?’ I had to admit it was mine. He said I’d better get to work.”

Johnson went out into the shelling and rifle fire and got one more encouragement from the officer. “He said that he’d get me the Silver Star.”

For the next couple of days, the advancing German army quickly surrounded the two towns of Krinkelt and Rocherath and the Americans were under attack from both shelling and small arms fire.

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For the next couple of days,
Johnson transported wounded through the heavy shelling to aid stations. He made trip after trip, and his ambulance was hit several times by small arms fire, but Johnson went unscathed. It didn’t take long for the American troops to learn about the massacre that had occurred at Malmedy on Dec. 17 when SS units killed 84 American prisoners. Johnson had been there the day before.

“It changed our way of thinking about prisoners. We had been a peace-loving people before then.”

The 99th, despite its lack of experience, did its job and held up the German offensive just long enough to severely upset its timetable and to allow Allied reinforcements to be called up. Two of the division’s regiments were badly mauled, and had to be combined to make one effective regiment.

On Dec. 19, four days into the Battle of the Bulge, the division made its way to Eischen Ridge, just to the north of Malmedy, where it stood its ground against violent German attacks.

“I’ve always said, if you don’t get wounded, the war was really interesting to watch.”

On one run, Johnson and others were cutting through a woods and found an American fuel dump. “It was filled with five-gallon jerry cans of gasoline. There must have been 10,000 of them. The Germans had gone right by the dump and didn’t see it. And at that point they were running out of gas.”

His chore, sometimes day and night, was to keep heading to the battle areas, pick up wounded men, and bring them to aid stations. “It was a dangerous deal. I would have rather stayed in that church.”

When the order was given for the division to occupy the ridge, there were few roads through the Ardennes to where they wanted to go. “It was about 10 or 15 miles, and the other roads had been cut off. So the Corps of Engineers just cut a road through that forest. We were one of the last two ambulances to leave Klinkert.”

Johnson didn’t have any wounded for the trip, but he wasn’t alone. “I had four soldiers on each bench in the back, and there were two guys on the running boards. We left the windows open so they could hold on. They were very thankful for the ride.”

The weather during the battle was terrible, cold and snowy, and many American soldiers got frostbite. “I was saved by my truck. I would run that heater every day and every night. I never had wet feet. If I had room, I’d always invite other soldiers to share the back of the ambulance with me at night.”

He also was better prepared than many soldiers. “I never had boots. I had four-buckle overshoes, and they kept my feet dry.”

He said generally, the Germans didn’t shoot at the ambulances. “At least they hardly ever shot at me.”

Johnson kept sandbags stashed around his seat in the ambulance. “I don’t know if the sandbags worked, but everybody did it.”

On one run, Johnson got lost in the woods trying to find the wounded men. “I just kept driving around, and finally I switched on my half lights. It turned out I was right in the middle of an American unit in foxholes. A guy yelled, ‘Turn those damned lights off.’ And so I did.”

By January, things had calmed down quite a bit, he said. The Germans were stopped and had little fuel left after the heavy shelling from the German blitz in the Battle of the Bulge. Johnson stayed at the church until an officer sent him back to work.

By March, the 99th Division was on its way into Germany.

“I remember one town we went through called Duren. It was the most bombed-out town I ever saw, and we saw a lot. They put a blade on the front of the tanks and just had them follow the streetcar lines to clear the way.”

On March 11, 1944, the 99th became one of the first divisions to cross the Rhine River, crossing the bridge at Remagen.

“We were moving up the river, and toward evening we could look down the hill and see the Rhine River and the Ludendorff Bridge. They had captured it the day before. When we got up to the bridge, the guard said, ‘Not over five miles an hour and we mean it.’”

“The bridge had been hit so many times, that they had put sheets of steel over the holes. If you went more than five miles an hour, it would move those sheets. So we went. It was terrifying.

“And when we got to the other side, we realized that we could never go back. We thought we had been abandoned.
But it was amazing how many troops they brought over that bridge.

Before it collapsed, six divisions made it across the bridge and the pontoon bridges built near it. The Germans were shelling the bridge constantly and would now and then attack with airplanes. “We had the biggest collection of anti-aircraft guns ever assembled during the war at Remagen. They were up and down the river, on both sides.”

Still, a flight of two German planes came over the bridge. “They came through so fast it was unbelievable. They were the first jets in the war. Don’t think that wasn’t an eye opener. Of course, our AA batteries couldn’t hit them, but the jets also didn’t hit the bridge. They only made one pass.”

“The Americans were just like they were at a state high school basketball championship or something. They were all looking up and cheering as we tried to shoot them down.”

There was one down side. “Those AA rounds were coming down as fast as they were going up. We were hitting a lot of guys. It kept the ambulances busy.”

The divisions that made it across were able to form part of a pincers movement in the Ruhr Valley that had trapped thousands of German troops. In one day, the 99th Division captured 23,000 troops.

“I went by the stockade, and I remember that the German officers were mad as hell that the American soldiers wouldn’t salute them. They kept yelling about the Geneva Convention.”

By this time of the war, it was clear the German Army was finished. “They had no will to fight and nothing to fight with.”

The 99th was transferred to the Third Army in April and came under the leadership of the famed Gen. George Patton. Johnson had been a big fan of Maj. Gen. Courtney Hodges, the commander of the First Army. Those sentiments didn’t hold true for Patton.

On the 29th of April, the prisoner of war camp at Moosberg, Germany, was liberated by the U.S. 14th Armored Division. Johnson and the other nine ambulances in his unit were sent to the camp.

“We were talking to the prisoners. I had a bunch of Sunday papers that my folks had sent me rolled up behind my seat. One guy said, ‘Where are you from?’ I said Minneapolis. He said, ‘Oh, I’m from Duluth,’ and he grabbed those newspapers. I never saw him again. I’m sure he got a lot more out of them than I did.”

As the men were milling around the camp, Patton’s Jeep with the siren blaring suddenly roared into the stalag. “There was Patton, in all his glory. You knew he had to put in an appearance there. When he was done, the Jeep went roaring out of the camp right through all the prisoners. All of a sudden it came to a skidding stop. Patton jumped out and tore the stripes off a sergeant. They guy hadn’t saluted him.”

The division ended up in Linz, Austria. “I remember the American soldiers shooting the little chamois deer with their burp guns. The local farmers didn’t like that very much.”

In the hundreds of trips he made bringing soldiers to aid centers, Johnson never had a soldier die in the back of his ambulance. Of the ten ambulances in his unit, none was seriously hit during the war.

He said his closest call to an accident was when he was transporting some American soldiers and one German soldier to a hospital. “It was pitch black out, and I was trying to follow the cat-eye lights of the trucks in front of me. The German kept complaining and complaining. The Americans were quiet. They were going home.

“Well, I lost track of the other trucks, and I speeded up to try to catch them. Sure enough, I ran right into another truck in the dark. Wouldn’t you know it, it was the German who got thrown out of the stretcher onto the floor. Boy, did he complain then.”

While the rest of medical unit got ready to head for the war in the Pacific, Johnson was able to use the points he had earned for his Bronze Star to get a 30-day furlough back to the United States. He was with his family in Minnesota when the war with Japan ended.

He was never reunited with his division, and was sent to Fort Hood in Texas and then to Louisiana where he guarded prisoners. He got out in December of 1945.

After a stint at the Minnesota School of Business, he and his brother, Kenny, ran the Johnson and Meyer Clothing store in Red Wing. It is now a confectionary shop.

He married Frankie in 1949, and they had two girls. Frankie, who was an accomplished rosemaling artist, died seven years ago.

Johnson still lives in his hometown and still goes down to the Red Wing American Legion Post for a cup of coffee now and then. He said he likes to give Past National Commander Dan Ludwig, also a member of the post, a hard time.

A U.S. Army photograph shows an ambulance delivering wounded soldiers to an aid station in Europe during World War II.

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A U.S. Army photograph shows an ambulance delivering wounded soldiers to an aid station in Europe during World War II.

Frankie, who was an accomplished rosemaling artist, died seven years ago.

Johnson posed with his mother and father when he was home on furlough in Red Wing.

Johnson stood by some of the local architecture in Bavaria at the close of the war.
FIRST DISTRICT
Myron Ehrlich
Commander

I was invited to attend the 59th Annual Vonnie Dinner on January 16 at the Minnesota veterans Home in Hastings. The meal was very good and had a good time visiting with the other District Commanders that were in attendance. I am looking forward to the National Commanders Tour in Minnesota. Let’s all give him a great Minnesota welcome. I hope to meet the new Ulm Post 132 for the evening meal. Is the weather going to be good for his week and also for the Sweet Heart Rally in Chanhassen? We have had some snow this week, but we hope we have the heat of control over that. We just have to take what comes. Think Spring.

SECOND DISTRICT
Jennifer Kafka
Commander

As I sit and wonder what to write about the main thing that pops in my head is “what act or organization are we doing wrong with new members?” I don’t think it is negative but we always look at what we are doing right in getting new members, but our retention is down. Our members are college students, people who have jobs but don’t have time and are not in a personal situation that we are doing wrong to keep them? Are we investing in new members? Because if not why should they invest in us? Are they just a number to us? If we are not making them feel like a number “will” drop, but if we take time to get to know them, invite them to events, learn about these men and women who, chances are have a story to tell. Then when we give them more than a membership, we give them a place to belong, a place that understands and is there even if its just to listen. Mentoring is great. This has been around for a long time but we need to use it the right way, we need to guide and teach. Not preach and point out everything they are doing “Wrong” or talking down to members, these are things that will belittle and leave a sour taste in anyone’s mouth.

I love the American Legion Family and what it stands for. I am passionate about its beliefs but I am more passionate about our veterans. So please if you have a new member you know of or a long time member who hasn’t been active reach out to them, befriend them but more importantly invest in them.

THIRD DISTRICT
Duane Anderson
Commander

I’m still trying to get caught up after the holidays with days going by too fast. I just read a reporting sent down from National American Legion regarding our nationals and thought I might recap some of it. The report quotes Air Force Secretary Deborah Lee James. She states that the Air Force is planning for future budget constraints at the same time are pursuing the fight against terrorists in the Islamic State of Iraq and the Event over the skies of Syria and Iraq. Our Air Force has provided much needed support in the 16,000 plus sorties that has been flown over this area. At the same time, she said, the Air Force is ensuring the United States remains dominant in the air and in space and executing missions ranging from intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance to global mobility and global strike. She indicates that the tough budget decisions have led to an increasingly stressed Air Force and our posts need to work to support our combatants. I think that everyone wants more Air Force and we have never been busier around the world. Demand for our services is up, but we need to address those demands today with the smallest Air Force in our history. I hope the rest of our military is facing these same challenges at the same time our country is trying to find new ways to give away money.

FOURTH DISTRICT
Dan Williams
Commander

Our Mid-Winter was held at Arcade Phalen Post 577. A good time was had by all. Legionnaires, Auxiliary and Sons members we thank you all for making it a success. Post 577, you were an outstanding host, as always. We appreciate every guest and visitor for taking the time to come and share a portion of your busy day with us.

Congratulations Carroll “Bird” Partridge on receiving endorsement from 3M Post 599 for 2015-2016 Department Vice Commander for 4th and 5th Districts. We know you will serve the department and department very well, if elected. A rare “Bird” and great choice.

Calendar reminders: Wednesday, February 4th National Communication Committee meeting at Roseau (Memorial 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. to 11:45 a.m.). Saturday, February 7th, Sweetheart Rally at Chanhassen Post 580 (Turn-in 3:00–4:00 P.M.) February 13 - Dept. Oratorical at Bulls Island 50 - AM (Cowan Rapids & Ossie) and Finals - PM (Anoka). February 11th RCCC District Meeting will be held at Rosetown Post 542. The E-Board meeting will start at 5:00 and special general meeting starts at 7:00 P.M. Our guest speaker will be Past Department Commander Mike Ash. Minneapolis VA Visitation Sunday, February 15th. Minneapolis VA Visitation Sunday, February 15th.

FIFTH DISTRICT
Wayne Glanton
Commander

The holidays are over and we must work on membership. Old and new members are what we need. Chairmen, every member should call on two members that you know and encourage them to pay their dues.

With all the benefits and programs that the Legion has to offer, this is the right time to start and help your posts to meet their membership total. The Oratorical program is now being put together. It will be third in line after the State will be in line after the State but it is up to you as the individual person to enter the contest. The prize is for a scholarship to a college. I have attended the contest in the past and the prizes are $2500. Be prepared for the contest and present your subject.

I am amazed how the motorcycle riders can raise so much money on their rides. Keep up the good work riders. I hope you are able to settle your problem.

John Austin, our Sargent at Arms, is doing a great job at raising funds for the commander’s project. Thank you, John. And may God Bless America.

SIXTH DISTRICT
Carl Moon
Commander

The Sixth District is the starting new year in a pretty close race with our Sixth District, the Ninth, for First Place in the Mid Winter and Membership Rally. Membership, in the Sixth District, is always trying to one-up the other and so it appears this is happening between our Districts. Currently the Ninth is in the lead by only a 0.5% with the Sixth District being very close and we know on our last day of the Mid Winter Conference, we will be asking people to put in $600.00 toward my Commander Project. This year is to raise money to purchase a handicap accessible pool table for the Veterans Home in Fergus Falls. They have set a cost of $60,000.00 and are getting donations from other area organizations as well as from the Ninth District. My goal is $25,000 and I think that we could go beyond that. I would like to see every Post in the District contribute something, even if you can only afford $10.00.

Last year’s project, a bingo machine, was a success as was just reported that the Eighth District had a Bingo machine knocking perfectly. Jen Morken, last year’s 9th District President and myself will have to set a time to go down and have a photo taken with the new Bingo Machine.

SEVENTH DISTRICT
Victor Gades
Commander

We are just back from Mid-Winter and membership rally at the Oliveira VFW Post 103 in Nisswa. We had a very successful American Legion and Auxiliary memberships turned-in for the day. Thank you to all that attended.

We are facing many incoming memberships; the membership team has been doing well. If you are lagging in meeting goals be prepared to be receiving a call from the membership team. We do already have 17 Posts at 100% or better, with several Posts within striking distance by one or two memberships. Even if you are at 100%, you still may have some members that have lagged over the years and there are definitely other eligibly members out there. Now is the time to contact these individuals, find out why they have not renewed?

A short message to 7th District Posts: We want a valid email from each Post that will accept electronic mailing. By the time our Post receives a printed newsletter some or all the included information is at best 10 to 14 days old, some even older. Having these emails will enable District and even State staffs to communicate and disseminate info in a more realistic time frame.

EIGHTH DISTRICT
Wilson Spence
Commander

I would like to thank all who attended our Mid Winter meeting in Virginia. I also would like to publicly thank Kurt E. Thielen, business manager for the VA Medical Center Minneapolis for his willingness to speak to us. All attendees were able to renew friendships, make new ones, learn more about The American Legion, and able to hear from/ask questions of Thielen about VA health care.

We are all members of that American Legion Family. When any of our district posts excel, we all excel. When any of our posts have difficulty, we all have difficulty with them and we can only help in any way we can. I know many post are excelling and a few are struggling. The Eighth District members want to give our aid and share our ideas to help them. Membership is a very important to all of us. The national, department of Minnesota, and the district all speak of the importance of membership. Membership is a very important to all of us. The national, department of Minnesota, and the district all speak of the importance of membership. The sacrifices for our Nation continue with the activities of our posts. When you help a fellow veter- an, when you call your local elected official, when you contact your public officials, you help The American Legion. Ask your neighbor, your policeman, your sheriff, your family members, the new person who say “yes” and be a become an American Legionary.

NINTH DISTRICT
Thomas Norgaard Sr.
Commander

February stacks up to be a fairly busy month. On the 2nd I will meet the National Commander Mike Helm at Walker for supper. The 6th is our 9th District Godfathers Rally in Mahnomen at the Post starting at 6:00 am. Let’s help all the Godfathers out and have a lot of memberships to turn in at the Sweet Heart Rally Rally on the 11th. We have set the goal to get to 90% by that date. During the Mid-Winter-Winter Conference, I was able to turn in $11,679 to help us get to the 90% goal for the 2015-2016 Department of Defense reported goal. The 9th District is the lead District for the second year in a row. We need to continue to pull together and work toward our goal to make the Ninth District Number One. We have done that in the past and are hoping to reach that goal again this year.

TENTH DISTRICT
Tom Sanders
Commander

Mid-Winter conference at Anoka Post 102 went well. I want to thank “Helping Paws” for their demonstration of the services combined project. I hope that everyone present enjoyed it and found it a deserving project to donate to. I hope that our Post received a printed newsletter today from you and that you can bring back to your own American Legion Family in your community and use. I would also like to thank the American Legion for putting on such a great conference.

The 44th Annual 10th District Snowmobile Rally was a huge success. It is my honor and pleasure to thank everyone who contributed toward this successful rally. We were able to have great fun with the rally. The weather was very cold making it very cold making it very cold even older. Having these emails will enable District and even State staffs to communicate and disseminate info in a more realistic time frame.

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Minnesota Legionnaire Obituary Policy

Obituaries of members of the Legion Family will be published in the Minnesota Legionnaire in a monthly column under the heading “Taps.”

Obituaries must be recent, within the last two months prior to publication of the new edition of the Legionnaire. For example, the February edition would only contain obituaries from January 1 to February 15. While the obituaries are brief, the Legionnaire does seek certain information for our readers.

1. Complete name of deceased.
2. Age at death.
3. Branch of service and war or wars the veteran served in.
4. Exact date of death.
5. Additional information about the veteran’s service background including unit type, service of place, service of medals, etc.

The post, unit, sponsor, and/or newsletter deceased belonged to.
7. Additional information about Legion Service including officer held posts.

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

As I have traveled around the State of Minnesota this year, there is one thing that truly sticks out and that is the Minnesota Legions epitomizes the term American Legion Family. The kindness and helpfulness that we have been extended to me as the Detachment Commander of Minnesota has been unbelievable and I thank all of you who have supported me.

As I write this article, I have traveled to three detachments and willer be hitting two more this week end. From what I can see there has been a very well run and the reports and speakers have been very interesting. It is obvious to me that The American Legion Family is working very hard on our programs and setting them in motion.

Just a reminder to the SAL members here in the Detachment of Minnesota that it is not too early to start planning our Spring Meeting in Anoka. This will be held the following day and the Friday, March 20, 2015. The general session will be here for the first time in Anoka and will likely result in a little extra to allow those of you that are planning on going to the department commander’s testimonial in Anoka. More information will be coming soon from Detachment Commander Jim Hulette.

We are having a great year with our membership program. We have met all national targets to date and have stayed consistently in the top 10 nationally for a number of weeks now. We have also been number one in the Central Region on a number of occasions. I have to say that we are on track to obtain a score not only for Minnesota and I am confident that we will have no idea what type of a goal to set since this particular project was a first for Minnesota and a lot of people have little or no knowledge of this terrific program. However, based on donations to date, I have finally set a goal for my year. Since we are going for 11,000 members in 2014, the goal has to be set.

As for my project of the city of Minneapolis, I think the goal is set. I have no idea what type of a goal to set since this particular project was a first for Minnesota and a lot of people have little or no knowledge of this terrific program. However, based on donations to date, I have finally set a goal for my year. Since we are going for 11,000 members in 2014, the goal has to be set. I have no idea what type of a goal to set since this particular project was a first for Minnesota and a lot of people have little or no knowledge of this terrific program. However, based on donations to date, I have finally set a goal for my year. Since we are going for 11,000 members in 2014, the goal has to be set.

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Silver bay hosts 23rd Superior fishing trip

Since 1993, the Silver Bay Minnesota Veterans Home has hosted a fishing trip on Lake Superior. This year, 60 residents from Silver Bay, Minneapolis, Hastings and Fergus Falls fished and caught 50 fish on 15 charters. They later had a shore lunch.

At top, Art Kale get his line ready. At bottom, a poster welcomes vets aboard a volunteer-donated charter boat.

ST. FRANCIS DONATION -- St. Francis Post 622 donated over $6,000 worth of clothing to the St. Cloud VA Medical System at Christmas time. The money came from the post's annual Support our Troops Golf Tournament. In front is tournament organizer Bob Nelson with some of the donation boxes.

FIFTH DISTRICT AT MOA -- Organized by the SAL's Shawn Davis, the Fifth District had a booth at the Mall of America. Carol Larson, right, holds the baby of a veteran signing up for additional information. Richfield Unit 435 President Jill Davis sat behind the booth.

VIKES HONOR WINDOM VET -- Joe Carpenter, a Viking season ticket holder since 1963 and a longtime member of Windom Post 206, was honored during the Vikings-Bears game in December. Carpenter, who got a standing ovation from the crowd, served with the 45th Division in North Africa and Italy, and was at the invasion of Sicily where his landing craft was sunk and he had to swim ashore under enemy fire. He wore his Legion hat for the recognition at TCF Bank Stadium.

NORTH BRANCH HONOR -- North Branch Past Commander and Chaplain Jim Johnson, center, was honored as North Branch Post 85's Member of the Year. Presenting were Commander Randy Kolvisto and 10th District Vice Commander Ron Rollins.


HAMEL VETS VOLUNTEER -- Three members of Hamel Post 394 serve on the Fort Snelling Memorial Rifle Squad in the Tuesday group as well as doing thousands of our hours of volunteer work. From left are: Dale Malmberg, Jim Heimerl and Roman Rowan.
National President Jefford to visit Minnesota March 2-5

By Chris Ronning

national President Janet Jefford will be in Minnesota on Monday, March 2, through Thursday, March 5. There is a daily itinerary included in this issue of the Legionnaire. Please make a point to visit our one of our stops a "fun night" telling everyone of her year so far and her plans for the balance of her year.

Jefford, of Manchester, Conn., was elected national president of the American Legion Auxiliary during the organization’s 94th National Convention in Charlotte, N.C. Aug. 22.

Jefford joined the American Legion Auxiliary through her father William Victor Lucas, a WWII Army veteran. She is also eligible through her husband, Jeff, a Desert Storm Army veteran. Jefford is a member of Goodwin-Beaumont Unit 5. Jefford is the first Connecticut resident to represent the American Legion Auxiliary as national president since Helen Lee Gilbert during the 1944-45 administrative year. She has held numerous leadership positions in the organization at the unit, district and department levels, including eight national program chairmanships. She currently serves on the 2014-2019 Centennial Strategic Planning leadership team.

Jefford recently retired as vice president of institutional effectiveness at Goodwin College in East Hartford, Conn. She served as a commissioner on an agency that accredits schools and colleges, and as president and chairman of the Board of Connecticut Training Center, a community-based nonprofit training center. Jefford has two children and two grandchildren. All are members of The American Legion Family.

STATE JUNIOR CONFERENCE

The 52nd Annual Department Junior Conference will be held April 10th and 11th at the Stewartville American Legion Post 164, Stewartville, Minnesota, hosted by the First 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. Your member will enjoy a "fun night" on Friday, April 10th, the night before the opening of the Conference. The 1st 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 Jules Efta, the Department Honorary Junior Chairman. 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 to 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 15. There are no increases in dues at either the National or Department level this year.

If our Department President Chris has attended an Auxiliary or Legion function in your community, be certain to share with her through her Memory Book Chairman any pictures, newspaper articles, etc. that pertain to her visit. If you wish to send a copy of the article, please mail it C/O Sandy Deutsch, 88 E. 10th St., St. Charles, Minnesota 55972 or email us to Jill@jilly1026@gmail.com. You can also send them to the department office and we will forward them for you. It has been such a pleasure watching Chris have so much fun while still getting our American Legion Auxiliary message out this year.

POPPOY ORDERS

Shipment of 2015 Poppy orders began last fall as orders were received and Poppies were available. All orders are shipped according to the “need by” date indicated when the order was placed. Orders are shipped by first class mail. Upon receipt of your Poppies please check it carefully. Contact the department office with any discrepancies. If your Unit has already ordered Poppies, but needs more, please order again. Units may place as many Poppy orders as they want to.

If you haven’t placed your Poppy order yet, please do so. We need to finalize our number of Poppies needed for this year’s Poppy distribution so we can plan accordingly. Let’s have 100% Unit participation in the Auxiliary Poppy program. If your Unit is out of 444 Units 326 have placed orders. Remember our Poppies are made by our veterans and they receive a small compensation for their work. Let’s support their efforts.

2016 MEMBERSHIP DUES

Gosh, it seems that these months go by so fast — in the February Unit mailing, every Unit received a notice asking for the amount of your Unit’s 2015 Senior and Junior dues, and the name and address of the person whose name should be added to unit’s 2015 dues notice. Please make sure this information gets back to Sandie at the Department Office by March 15. There are no increases in dues at either the National or Department level this year.

SCHOLARSHIPS

Just a reminder for any Department and National scholarships must be received in the department office by March 15. Let your schools know they are available and provide them with the application forms. They are also posted on our website for your convenience. If additional copies are needed, you may duplicate those you have received or contact the Department office.

PRESIDENT’S MEMORY BOOK

If our Department President Chris has attended an Auxiliary or Legion function in your community, be certain to share with her through her Memory Book Chairman any pictures, newspaper articles, etc. that pertain to her visit. This is an entire book that we compile to share with our past presidents. Please send us any that you may have. We can also send them to the department office and we will forward them for you. It has been such a pleasure watching Chris have so much fun while still getting our American Legion Auxiliary message out this year.

What an amazing month of January, the weather was kind to us, gas prices kept getting lower, how much better can it get!

I attended seven District Mid-winters throughout our great state. As each District Chairmen gave their reports I knew we are in good hands.

These ladies give so much to work our programs and I want to thank them for all they do.

Sandie and I went over to the Fisher House to deliver all the items the Auxiliary members have collected. We were running out of space at the office.

We had several bags to be delivered and also lots of gift cards, such as gas cards, Target and Wal-Mart cards and many more.

I wasn’t sure how this would work, when I asked the members to bring items to the Fisher House. They came through, plus so much more.

Some of you had Fisher House Showers, Silent Auctions, collected items at your Unit meetings and Raffles. I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart for your generosity.

February will be another busy month. Our National Commander Mike Helm will be visiting our great state.

Let’s hope that the weather stays nice for a little while longer. I hope some of our Auxiliary members will be able to visit with him at one of his stops.

I am looking forward to Washington DC in February. This is such an exciting city and it gives me a chance to visit with our Legislators and talk to them about issues concerning our Veterans.

A few dinners, Department Sweetheart Rally and final Oratorical contests are coming up.

American Legion Bowling will kick off February 21st. I will be on my way to Washington, so you will miss me running out of space at the office.

I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart for your kind to us, gas prices kept getting lower, how much better can it get! It would have been ugly.

This is one of the best programs we as the American Legion Auxiliary offer.

These ladies are the cream of the crop and I encourage all Units to send at least one girl.

Keep our service men and their families in your prayers and let’s not forget our Veterans that gave so much so we can live in this great country.

Our Veterans – Past – Future and Present.
I am sure many of you have some real interesting “moments.”

UNIT ANNUAL REPORTS

Unit Annual Reports have been mailed to each Unit in January. All reports, instruction sheets and history paper will be in one envelope. If you don’t receive this envelope, contact the Department office immediately. Please note: The Unit reports cover the period from April 1, 2014 to March 31, 2015. This year the reports have again been reformatted because of the feedback we received from the Units. We have made the Unit reports like those in the past. When our Units feel better with doing things we do everything in our power to come through.

All Unit reports are due on or before April 15. Reports are important. Let’s hear from every Unit.

GIRLS STATE

Now is the time to send your $150 to reserve a place for your American Legion Auxiliary Minnesota Girls State citizen(s). Cut-off for reservations is March 31. Upon receipt of 100% paid by 6 p.m. per girl you will receive the needed registration packet(s).

Enrollment is limited to the first 445 applications received. The name of the girl, information sheet, enrollment card, pledge and order form for the citizen’s Capitol card, pledge and order form for the citizen’s Capitol will be sent to the Department office by May 1.

The number to restriction as to the number of delegates a Unit may send to Girls State from their high school(s). The delegate must be a Minnesota resident, attend and be in the nation beyond the date of the high school principal has received a mailing pertaining to Girls State. Contact your high school now and let them know if you will be sponsoring a girl. High schools may not register a girl on their own. All Girls State citizens must be sponsored by an American Legion Auxiliary Unit. Girls State will be held June 7-12 at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul. This year will be very exciting with many new changes in store.

SECRETARY SANDIE’S NOTES

Another month has come and gone - spring is getting closer every day. I would like to announce that I have introduced my newest staff member, Julie Denne. Julie will be greeting you when you call in to our Department Office. Take a minute to wish her well. She has started out running our office just fine. I hope to see many of you at one or all of these membership rallies. They are a great time to visit and make up with those you haven’t seen in awhile and to meet new friends. I need to do a much better job of making sure our staff understands the importance of their role in the Department.

I know this gets beaten to death but I would like to bring up membership. We have been doing a great job to date but here is where we are always seem to falter. We are in 5th place in the nation but we are behind last year’s Minnesota numbers by 1,489 dues paid. I encourage you to attend as many as you can. We have the Sweetheart Rally in Chanhassen, the National President’s Tour, the Family Rally in Duluth. I hope to see many of you at one or all of these membership rallies. They are a great time to visit and catch up with those you haven’t seen in awhile and to meet new friends.

As chairman for Legislation in the Department of MN, we would like to introduce our newest staff member, Joanne Joachim. Joanne has been with us for a few months now and has become an integral part of the Department. She will be helping me with the reporting of legislation and I am sure she will be a great addition to our team.

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Americanism Month

The Americanism program promotes patriotism and responsible citizenship year round. We, as the Auxiliary, should be promoting patriotism and responsible citizenship all year round. We should be doing this not only at our meetings but all around our communities.

What can you do?

- Be knowledgeable on flag history, etiquette, and proper flag disposal methods and promote the observation of patriotic holidays so our communities will look to the ALA for information.
- As a unit you can conduct a flag disposal ceremony, host flag awareness events, participate in local patriotic holiday events encourage members to fly the flag, compile a list of patriotic holidays and events and share with your unit.
- As a member you can publish flag etiquette tips in the newspaper or social media, practice respect for the flag at public events, volunteer for a local patriotic event.
- Encourage our members to get out and vote.
- As a unit encourage members to participate in Get Out to Vote and Kids Voting USA campaigns.
- As a member, vote and encourage others to vote, take your children/grandchildren with you when you vote.
- Increase participation in the Americanism Essay Contest. This year’s theme is “What Does Freedom Mean to my Family?” Guidelines were sent in earlier Unit mailings for the contest and will be included again.
- As a unit contact schools and other organizations such as Boy and Girl Scouts about the essay contest, offer incentives for winners, encourage your juniors to participate in the contest, create information packets on the contest, work with school administration to identify guidance counselors, history teachers, etc. whose students would be interested in participating. Include this in your unit report to your district, department and national American Legion.
- As a member encourage your children/grandchildren to participate, offer to contact schools or other organizations, help judge essays.
- Promote pride in belonging to the world’s largest patriotic women’s organization, the American Legion Auxiliary.
- As a unit and member support Americanism programs. As a unit and member work with the post and or district Americanism chairman, support and help with American Legion Baseball, support the oratorical contest at either post or District level, support Junior Shoot Sports.
- Please check the American Legion’s Action Program of Americanism brochure: www.legion.org/publications.

American Legion Auxiliary
National President’s state tour schedule

2015 American Legion Auxiliary National President’s Tour

National President Janet Jefferson

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Phone</th>
<th>Cost</th>
<th>Deadline</th>
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<tr>
<td>Plainview Unit #179</td>
<td>5:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Social</td>
<td>507-534-2921</td>
<td>$12.00</td>
<td>2/25/2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>213 5th St. SW</td>
<td>6:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Dinner</td>
<td>(for reservations)</td>
<td>Contact is Marie Goeke</td>
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<tr>
<td>New Ulm Unit 132</td>
<td>12:00 noon</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td>507-354-4016</td>
<td>$7.60</td>
<td>2/24/2015</td>
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<tr>
<td>13 South Minnesota</td>
<td>5:30 p.m.</td>
<td>Social</td>
<td>507-334-8784 or <a href="mailto:dinare@carleton.edu">dinare@carleton.edu</a></td>
<td>$15.00</td>
<td>2/20/2015</td>
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<tr>
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<td>507-330-4683</td>
<td>(for reservations)</td>
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<td>112 5th St. NE</td>
<td>6:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Dinner</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Osseo Unit 172</td>
<td>5:30 p.m.</td>
<td>Social</td>
<td>763-424-8812</td>
<td>Erin Raddeen</td>
<td>2/27/2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>763-424-4858 Post</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ossie Unit 172</td>
<td>5:30 p.m.</td>
<td>Social</td>
<td>763-424-8858 Post</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday, March 5, 2015</td>
<td>6:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Dinner</td>
<td>(for reservations)</td>
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Legislative Month

As chair for Legislation in the Department of MN, we as Auxiliary members must become more aware of veteran issues. Members need to know the importance of contacting our senators, legislators, and representatives. We must be advocates to ensure our Veterans are cared for, honored, and respected!

Even though monthly newsletters are sent out by the Department we must open doors and contact our representatives, either by phone, letters, e-mail, etc.

2014 was another election year with many changes. Changes, not just for the state of MN, but the Federal government changes for Senators and House of Representatives. We must continue to contact these members and remind them of the oath and promises they made in representing all of us, especially our veterans and their families.

One positive item this past session was, as of Jan 2, 2015, Minnesota Women Veterans are now able to purchase license plates in their honor. It states “woman veteran”. Cost for each plate is an extra $20.00 for registration and taxes. This is an honor for the some 29,000 female veterans in Minnesota.

Our NW Division chairman, Norma Tramm, keeps us updated and informed of changes with Veterans issues and what contacts are in Washington.

As Auxiliary members we must always be reminded — we follow the actions of The American Legion, never endorsing any measure until The American Legion has first endorsed it.

As the Auxiliary year continues, I will advocate to our members important issues facing the Veterans and their families.

We will continue to encourage members to contact their representatives. Be a “voice.” Be “heard.”

~ Sandy Fredrickson

SANDY FREDRICKSON
Legislative Chairman
Reverse Mortgages

Call for a free consumer guide and personal quote. -- Must be 62 or older. -- Never make a monthly mortgage payment again. -- Receive a lump sum of cash, credit line or monthly payments. -- Income and credit not required.

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You can receive this newspaper by email just by going to the Minnesota Legion website: mnlegion.org

Mortgage Rates are at historic lows!

What would you do with a new mortgage?

- Take Cash out
- Save money every month
- Consolidate your bills
- Purchase a new home with $0 down
- Ask us about lender paid costs

Gabriel Financial Group is a family-owned business

- Here to serve since 1999
- Highest Better Business Bureau rating in the industry

We look forward to hearing from you!