Past Department Commander G.D. “Hoot” Gibson Remembered

G.D.“Hoot” Gibson
Past Department Commander, 2010-11

Glenn “Hoot” Gibson Jr, 88, died on May 1, 2018 at the Sioux Falls VA Medical Center in Sioux Falls, SD. Glenn “Hoot” Gibson Jr was born on Veterans Day, November 11, 1929 in Marshall, MN to parents, Glenn and Frances (Draper) Gibson. Glenn graduated from Garretson High School and worked as a meat cutter following his education. In 1951 – 1953 he joined the United States Air Force and later worked full time at the Air National Guard and retired after 39 years of dedicated service to his country. Hoot volunteered at the VA Hospital for over 12 years and would generally spend his birthdays putting up flags around the city, then attending the community Veterans Day program, enjoying the American Legion stew and cake luncheon, and volunteering at the VA service of remembrance.

Hoot, being an Air Force Veteran, was well known at the Air National Guard Base and very active in the American Legion. He had been a member for 50 years! Hoot served as commander of the local American Legion Post 15 from 1989-1990 and as the state commander from 2010-2011. Hoot was an honored Life Member of the American Legion Post 15, Voiture, TREA, American Military Association, Disabled American Veterans, Minnehaha Masonic Lodge, and the El Riad Shriners.

The American Legion family filled most the pews of West Nidaros Church in Crooks, SD on May 10th, as Legionnaires, family and friends gathered to pay respect. Sioux Falls Post #15 hosted a lunch following the funeral.

On May 11th, Hoot was laid to rest in the Black Hills National Cemetery with full military honors. Legionnaires in attendance gave their final salute to a dedicated commander and comrade as he was transferred to the Post Everlasting.

Rest in Peace, Commander.

Lake Preston Post Honors Namesake in Homecoming Memorial Ceremony

On March 31st, 2018 nearly 400 people gathered in the Lake Preston High School Gymnasium to witness the memorial service for US Navy Water Tender Second Class Petty Officer Porter L. Rich, who had perished in the bombing of Pearl Harbor and was recently accounted for through the work of the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency. Post #63 Adjutant, Dave Gutzmer, presided over the ceremony. Notable attendees included guest speaker and Lieutenant Governor Matt Michels, Congresswoman Kristi Noem, several state legislators, as well as an impressive assembly of Legionnaires, Riders, Sons and Auxiliary from across the Department of South Dakota.

Full Military Funeral Honors were conducted by the U.S. Navy & U.S. Air Force, which include members of the Active & Reserve Funeral Detail from the Navy Operational Support Center in Sioux Falls, SD and members of the Ellsworth Air Force Base Honor Guard Team, from Rapid City, SD. Members of Lake Preston American Legion Post #63 & American Legion Auxiliary Unit #63 provided refreshments and a light lunch at the gymnasium following the cemetery honors.

Porter Leigh Rich was born March 24, 1914, in Lake Preston, SD. He was the second of four children born to his parents, Louise L. and Ora Leigh (Rewey) Rich. His siblings were the late Francis (Rich) Loomis, the late Fern Rich, and the late Alford “Ted” Rich.

Memories passed down from his brother, Ted, were of Porter being an avid reader. He also loved the outdoors, with passions for hunting and studying trees. Trees planted by Porter in his youth are still standing today around his childhood farm place. He graduated from Lake Preston High School in 1931 and joined...
Five Districts Elect District Commanders

*District Vice Commanders and County Commanders Also Elected*

During the 2018 Spring District Conventions, new leadership was elected in the even-numbered Districts as well as a special election in District 5. Additionally, new leadership in all counties in the Department were elected.

Elected to serve as District Commanders and District Vice Commanders were the following individuals:

Eugene Iron Shell, Jr. of Rosebud was elected for a two-year term as the District 2 Commander and Cynthia Douglas of Rapid City was elected for a two-year term as the District 2 Vice Commander during the annual District 2 Spring Convention on March 11th in Hot Springs, SD.

Perry Schmidt was elected to serve a two-year term as District 4 Commander and Bob Thompson of Selby was elected to a two-year term as District 4 Vice Commander, respectively.

Matt Langstrom of White assumed duties as District 5 Commander for a one-year term and Krissna DeWitt of Watertown was elected for a one-year term as District 5 Vice Commander, respectively.

Doug Feltman of Chamberlain was elected to a two-year term as District 6 Commander and Vilas Kurtenbach of Ethan was elected to a two-year term as District 6 Vice Commander, respectively, during the annual District 6 Spring Convention in Watertown, SD.

Greg Geiman of Scotland was elected to a two-year term as District 8 Commander and Jim Hornstra was elected to a two-year term as District 8 Vice Commander on March 16th during the annual District 8 Spring Convention in Wagner, SD.

**DEPARTMENT OFFICERS**

**State Commander** — Hugh “Homer” Holmes, Mitchell
**State Vice Commanders** — Fred Nelson, Spearfish; Denny Brenden, Watertown
**National Executive Committeeman** — Jim Huis, Madison
**Alternate National Executive Committeeman** — Tery Hanson, Arlington
**State Adjutant** — Travis Flisrand, Castlewood
**State Americanism Officer** — Larry Madsen, Gettysburg
**State Membership Chairman** —olly Quan, Arlington
**State Service Officer** — Courtney VanZanten, Chester
**State Chaplain** — Larry Klumb, Ethan
**State Finance Officer** — Gary Wolkow, De Smet
**State Historian** — Fred Lee, Sioux Falls
**State Judge Advocate** — Gary Schumacher, De Smet
**State Sergeant-At-Arms** — Verle Whipple, Clear Lake
**State Children and Youth Chairman** — Miranda Kumm, Chester

**DISTRICT COMMANDERS**

1—Kevin Morello, Black Hawk 5—Matt Langstrom, White
2—Eugene Iron Shell, Jr., Rosebud 6—Doug Feltman, Chamberlain
3—Lee Roy Madson, Pierre 7—Ed Stringer, Hartford
4—Perry Schmidt, Stratford 8—Greg Geiman, Scotland

Advertising rates upon request; we reserve the right to refuse any advertisement.

**EDITORIAL POLICY**

The South Dakota Legion News is published six times a year to serve its members and interested parties by informing them of Department activities and other relevant issues concerning the veterans of South Dakota. The South Dakota Legion News is also the voice of the members. We welcome articles and photos from members. The news and opinions expressed in this publication does not necessarily reflect the views of The American Legion Department of South Dakota, its Officers, Members, or the Editor. The Editor has the right to edit all articles.
ANNUAL COMMITTEE REPORTS

These Annual Committee Reports are submitted and printed in the South Dakota Legion News in accordance with Article IV, Section 4 of The American Legion Department of South Dakota Constitution.

Annual Report of the Department Commander

Dear Legionnaires and The American Legion Family, Seems just like yesterday you made me your State Commander. It has been a whirlwind ride for 12 months. Fast and furious! All four corners of South Dakota and locations in between were visited. Being your Steward or Commander is a once in a lifetime experience. I thank you all for the opportunity to serve you and the Department of South Dakota. Met new friends as well reacquainted with old friends. I tried to place, on Facebook, everybody I visited.

Started off visiting Youth Trooper Academy in Pierre. The youth were outstanding as well as the instructors. All had a great experience. YTA is one of the best programs we offer to youth. Then off to Pierre again to give greetings at the South Dakota VFW convention.

July picked up with attending the National Membership Workshop in Indianapolis. Attended regional American Legion Baseball games and the first day of Class B tournament in Winner. Got to read The American Legion Baseball Code of Sportsmanship a few times. Met more youth and coaches. More outstanding youth in a great American Legion event.

August. Next on the list was the National Convention in Reno. Saw our first lady National Commander, Denise Rohan elected. That was a great day for The American Legion. Started to attend post meetings and post events around the state. Linda and I rode in the Hot Springs Post 71 Freedom Ride. This was our first poker run ever. We loved it. Thanks to the Post 71 family for a great time. At the State Fair, Warren Aas received the Chief Sorensen Outstanding Veteran Award. Got to visit Post 323 at my former college in Springfield. And I was not home for Linda’s and my 43rd anniversary. No cake in my face!

September started the Fall District Tour. We hit eight districts, had great times, and great food at each location. More post meetings and events. Rode in the Wagner Labor Day Parade. Spoke at the golf tournament. Just going here and there picking up the miles.

October was filled with Legion meetings and events. Went to Indianapolis for the Fall Meetings. Had a great time. I was selected by the 6th Dist. President to be her chauffeur. Had to drive her to six locations so she could provide training to her Unit Presidents. And I walked up and down the streets meeting folks. Box Elder’s Chili Cook-off was tasty. About 20 varieties.

November was exciting. Attended five Veterans Day programs. At Custer, got the seniors’ attention when I told them to give each attending veteran a $100.00 bill. Not one of them declined. I heard a lot of good laughs. Popped into Parker’s supper, surprising the Commander. Also attended many Turkey Bingo nights. Loved taking Hans’ prizes home! We pitched the East River Cemetery proposal at Legislative Roundtables in Sioux Falls, Watertown, and Rapid City. All VSOs united together fighting for the cemetery and we WON!

December wasn’t the best to travel but still made it to all events and meetings. In an 8-day period had to travel to Hot Springs three times for three different events. Enjoy attending Christmas parties in Yankton, Hot Springs, Sturgis, and Sioux Falls. Had a great time handing out presents, etc. And still made it to California to celebrate Grandson Leon’s 1st birthday.

During January drove to Pierre a few times for receptions and meetings. Did many grips and grins with legislators about veteran issues. Introduced the Boys and Girls State Governors to SD Governor Daugaard. Governor Daugaard and I were in the City of Philadelphia during the 1970 Boys State. Presented him a SDAL Centennial Coin. Attended more post and county meetings. Attended WWII Navy veteran Sylvan Vigness’s Purple Heart Medal Presentation. Also attended Davison County honoring WWII veterans with a special commemorative coin.

Two major events for February were Mid-Winter Conference and the Washington Conference. National Commander Rohan visited the Department at Mid-Winter. She discussed many items including why her shirt is purple and not pink. I picked her and Mike up at the airport and had an interesting one-on-one conversation with them on the way to Oacoma. At the Washington Conference, the high light was meeting with our US Congressional members. We presented the American Legion legislative priorities to those who are working to put their histories online for the 100th anniversary of The American Legion.

Assist those who are working to put their histories online for the 100th anniversary of The American Legion. And I will have a remembrance of your year as State Commander. And I will assist those who are working to put their histories online for the 100th anniversary of The American Legion.

Hugh Holmes

Hugh Holmes

Annual Report of the Department Historian

Dear State Commander and Members of the 2018 South Dakota Department of The American Legion:

I would like to thank you for appointing me as your Department Historian this year. It has been an honor to serve you as your Department Historian. I am working on the Department History for this year so you will have a remembrance of your year as State Commander. And I will assist those who are working to put their histories online for the 100th anniversary of The American Legion.

Post Historians should be finalizing their Post Histories now for the History Book contest at the State Convention in Spearfish in June. Entries in the One-Year Post Narrative and One-Year Post Yearbook will be judged by myself and other historians at the convention. In order to get this completed, we need all books to me or to the registration desk at the convention in Spearfish by Friday afternoon, June 17, no later than 3 pm in order to be judged. Guidelines and advice can be found in the Post Officer’s Guide, beginning on page 147.

During January drove to Pierre a few times for receptions and meetings. Did many grins and grins with legislators about veteran issues. Introduced the Boys and Girls State Governors to SD Governor Daugaard. Governor Daugaard and I were in the City of Philadelphia during the 1970 Boys State. Presented him a SDAL Centennial Coin. Attended more post and county meetings. Attended WWII Navy veteran Sylvan Vigness’s Purple Heart Medal Presentation. Also attended Davison County honoring WWII veterans with a special commemorative coin.

Two major events for February were Mid-Winter Conference and the Washington Conference. National Commander Rohan visited the Department at Mid-Winter. She discussed many items including why her shirt is purple and not pink. I picked her and Mike up at the airport and had an interesting one-on-one conversation with them on the way to Oacoma. At the Washington Conference, the high light was meeting with our US Congressional members. We presented the American Legion legislative priorities to those who are working to put their histories online for the 100th anniversary of The American Legion.

Respectfully submitted,
Fred Lee
Department Historian

This year 72 applications were received by the South Dakota Highway Patrol to participate in the Youth Trooper Academy in Pierre. The class size in 2018 will have 24 candidates. Below is a list of the candidates that were selected and will attend the 2018 Youth Trooper Academy.


Districts 6 & 7 each have 4 candidates selected to attend the academy. Districts 3, 4 & 8 each have 3 candidates selected to attend and Districts 1 & 2 each have 2 candidates selected to attend the 2018 academy.

We congratulate all the candidates selected and wish them the best of luck at the Youth Trooper Academy.

The dates of the Youth Trooper Academy are June 25-29, 2018. The program is designed to expose young adults to the demands of Highway Patrol Recruit training and to develop better relationships between the youth of our state and the Highway Patrol. Veteran South Dakota Highway Patrol Troopers will serve as mentors and chaperones during the week.

Troopers and members of other law enforcement agencies throughout the state of South Dakota will provide classroom and hands-on training in topics such as firearms safety, defensive driving, crash investigation, traffic stops, leadership, defensive tactics, and criminal law. Youth Academy Recruits will also get to experience demonstrations from the Highway Patrol’s special operations section such as aircraft operation, SWAT, and Police Service Dogs.

Happy 4th of July

Fred Lee
Department Historian

Make sure you include a complete copy of the entry form for each entry. These forms can be found on the Legion’s home page under “FORMS”. Look for “Post History Forms”. Plaques will be presented to the first, second, and third place winners.

I would encourage all posts to put together a post history, either in book form or now, online through the American Legion Centennial website. I thank all historians and Post members for their hard work and commitment in preparing these books. Your Post members will long appreciate your hard work in the years to come.

Respectfully submitted,
Fred Lee
Department Historian

This program is designed to expose young adults to the demands of Highway Patrol Recruit training and to develop better relationships between the youth of our state and the Highway Patrol. Veteran South Dakota Highway Patrol Troopers will serve as mentors and chaperones during the week.

Troopers and members of other law enforcement agencies throughout the state of South Dakota will provide classroom and hands-on training in topics such as firearms safety, defensive driving, crash investigation, traffic stops, leadership, defensive tactics, and criminal law. Youth Academy Recruits will also get to experience demonstrations from the Highway Patrol’s special operations section such as aircraft operation, SWAT, and Police Service Dogs.
American Legion Family members from across the state of South Dakota will gather in Spearfish, SD, June 7-10, 2018, at the Spearfish Convention Center for the 100th Annual Department Convention of The American Legion Department of South Dakota.

Highlighting the convention will be the election of the Department Commander for 2018-2019 near the end of the General Session of the Convention on Sunday, June 10. Other election activities will include the election of State Vice Commanders, Department Sergeant-At-Arms, and all Delegates and Alternate Delegates to the 100th Annual National Convention of The American Legion which is scheduled to be held in Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 24-30, 2018.

This year Denny Brenden, of Watertown, SD, is currently running unopposed for the office of Department Commander. This election will also be held on Sunday, June 10, around 12:00 noon.

Dignitaries invited to address the convention assembly include Dennis Daugaard, Governor of South Dakota; Sen. Mike Rounds, Sen. John Thune, Rep. Kristi Noem (or representatives from their offices); MG Timothy Reisch, Adjutant General and Secretary of Military Affairs; Sarah Bierman, U.S. Department of Labor; Adriene Benton, Director, Black Hills National Cemetery; Darwin Goodspeed, Director, Sioux Falls VA Health Care System; Larry Zimmerman, Secretary of Veterans Affairs; Brad Richardson, Superintendent, Michael Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home; COL Craig Price, South Dakota Highway Patrol; Judge Robert Spears, Veterans Court; Stephanie Judson, SD Community Foundation; Steve Thorsen, Mayor of Watertown; Sandra Horsman, Director, Black Hills VA Health Care System; and Shawn Bohn, VA Dakota Regional Office as well as the leadership of other major veterans service organizations in South Dakota.

This year, as at recent past state conventions, the department will recognize the State Oratorical Champion, and Boys State Governor.

Winners of the South Dakota American Legion Press Association competition will be announced.

Winners of the “Pride of the Prairie” membership awards, the “Excellence in Americanism” awards and the annual History Awards will also be held during the convention general assembly.

Additional activities will include the recognition of all District Legionnaires of the Year and the announcement of the Department Legionnaire of the Year as well as the recipient of the Robert C. Gabrielson Memorial Leadership Award.

There will also be presentations of multiple Employer of the Year and Membership Awards.

Activities planned for Thursday, June 7th, include the Department Finance Commission meeting at 10:00 a.m.; the Department Executive Committee will meet at 1:00 p.m.; and at 4:30 p.m., the 5-Year Membership Council/Public Relations Media Committee will meet. All of these meetings are scheduled to be held in the Willow/Aspen room in the Spearfish Convention Center. These are open meetings and everyone is invited to attend.

Activities for Friday, June 8th, starts off with the Resolutions Committee initial meeting at 10:00 a.m. in the Willow room. The Sons of the American Legion will hold a meeting at the same time in the Spruce room.

SDALPA will hold their annual luncheon and meeting at 11:30 a.m. in the Willow room. At 1:00 p.m. all the convention committee chairpersons will meet in the lobby area of the Spearfish Convention Center with Adjutant Flisrand where they will receive their committee packets. At 1:30 p.m., the meetings of all convention committees will take place. The Legion Riders will host their meeting at 4:00 p.m. in the Spruce room.

Following the committee meetings, there will be the annual Go-Getter reception and meal. The reception will be held at the Heritage Center with a social around 6:00 p.m. and the meal served shortly after social.

Of course, you may find a few hospitality rooms at the convention hotel after the Go-Getter reception. A great way to socialize, meet and greet fellow Legion Family members, and snack on some good food to end your day’s activities.

Again this year, a fun auction is planned with proceeds donated to the South Dakota American Legion Foundation. The fun auction is scheduled to be held in the pool area in the Holiday Inn hotel following the Go-Getter dinner.
the workforce. Porter then attempted to enlist in the US Navy but was rejected due to a heart murmur.

One year later, he tried to enlist again and was successful. His first enlistment had him serving on the USS Texas and USS Pennsylvania battleships. After re-enlisting for another 4 years in the spring of 1939, he was assigned to and served on the USS Oklahoma until his death on December 7, 1941.

After re-enlisting, Porter started planning his future. The fall before his passing, he married Margaret Lemkuhl in August 1941 in Yuma, AZ. While on their honeymoon, he was summoned back to the USS Oklahoma, which was anchored in San Diego, CA. The newlyweds returned to San Diego and the USS Oklahoma left for Pearl Harbor, HI in September. A son, Ronald Leigh Rich, was born to Porter and Margaret in May 1942.

On Dec. 7, 1941, Rich was assigned to the USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft. The USS Oklahoma sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen. Rich’s name is recorded on the Walls of the Missing at an American Battle Monuments Commission site along with the others who are missing from World War II. A rosette will be placed next to his name to indicate he has been accounted for. After 76 years, Porter L. Rich’s remains were identified positively through family DNA-testing and will now finally be home.

Rich’s son, Ronald, grew up with only shared memories and photos of his father, and treasures his father’s Purple Heart. In August 1949, The American Legion Post #63 in Lake Preston was named after the first person killed in action in WWII from the town, Porter L. Rich. Post #63 was honored to have Ronald in attendance for his father’s memorial service, and welcomed him into the fold as their newest Legion member.

For additional information on the Defense Department's mission to account for Americans who went missing while serving our country, visit DPAA website www.dpaa.mil.

---

**Midwest Honor Flight Ramps Up For Another Flight**

Aaron Van Beek is not your average 23-year-old. A few years ago, Aaron saw a need in Northwest Iowa, South Dakota, and Southwest Minnesota. Veterans were not having the time or the funds to see their memorials in Washington, D.C. In 2017, he started the Midwest Honor Flight program through the Honor Flight Network. This was the first Honor Flight to allow South Dakota Korean and Northwest Iowa veterans to fly to DC under the care and supervision of Honor Flight Guardians.

Not only is Aaron President & Director of Midwest Honor Flight, he also teaches third grade at Kinsey Elementary in Sioux Center, Iowa. Aaron is a member of the Sons of the American Legion Squadron 199 of Sioux Center and an Assistant Scoutmaster for the Sioux Center Boy Scouts. He also serves as President & Director for Sioux Center Wreaths Across America and Director for Leadership & Citizenship Focus. Aaron also holds the position of Director of Social Media and Senate Counselor for the Iowa American Legion Hawkeye Boys State program.

Midwest Honor Flight recognizes American veterans for their sacrifices and achievements by flying them to Washington, D.C. to see their memorial at no cost. Top priority is given to World War II and terminally ill veterans from all wars. Midwest Honor Flight also include Korean War and Vietnam War veterans. In order for Midwest Honor Flight to achieve this goal, guardians fly with the veterans on every flight providing assistance and helping veterans have a safe, memorable and rewarding experience. Veterans are flown on a “First to Apply, First to Fly” policy.

Of all the wars in recent memory, it was World War II that truly threatened our very existence as a nation—and as a culturally diverse, free society. According to the Department of Veterans Affairs, an estimated 640 WWII Veterans die each day. The time to express our thanks to these brave men and women is running out.

**ESTIMATED APPLICATION WAIT TIME:**

- WWII Veterans: NEXT FLIGHT
- Korean Veterans: NEXT FLIGHT - 6 MONTHS
- Vietnam Veterans: 1 - 2 YEARS

Not a veteran? Become a Guardian for one of the next Honor Flights! You’ll see everything that these heroes will see but you will be giving back at the same time - ensuring that each veterans has a safe and enjoyable experience in our nation’s capitol. Additional volunteer opportunities are available as an Honor Flight Ambassador. Ambassadors promote the Midwest Honor Flight program to veterans in your selected area, promote Midwest Honor Flight fundraising events, contact local businesses for financial support for our veterans Assist at events as much as able, and are present, if able, at the registration and especially the Welcome Home Ceremony on flight day.

Another opportunity on the horizon is Midwest Honor Flight’s Essay Contest. Midwest Honor Flight's Board of Directors wanted to engage more youth in their Mission: To transport America’s Veterans to Washington, D.C. to visit those memorials dedicated to honor the service and sacrifices of themselves and to fellow veterans. With this in mind, the Midwest Honor Flight Essay Contest entitled "Why Thank a Veteran" was formed as a way for youth to express the importance of this mission with their families, their communities, and to the veterans in which they will have the opportunity to meet. Students aged 16 and through college are invited to apply and write for this contest. This upcoming year’s contest will open again in January 2019.

All applications and more information can be found on midwesthonorflight.org. Donations can also be made on the website through their PayPal link. Checks can be mailed to:

Midwest Honor Flight
PO Box 22
Sioux Center, IA 51250

---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Upcoming Mission</th>
<th>Flight Date</th>
<th>Application Deadline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mission 3: Confirmed</td>
<td>25 SEP 2018</td>
<td>05 JUN 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mission 4: Tentative</td>
<td>14 MAY 2019</td>
<td>01 FEB 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mission 5: Tentative</td>
<td>24 SEP 2019</td>
<td>05 JUN 2019</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Commander,

The annual South Dakota American Legion Legislative Committee meeting was held October 21, 2017 by conference call. Present at this meeting were State Commander Hugh Holmes, Chairman PDC Mark Weinmann, Committee members present were Royce Loesch, PDC Rod Martens, PDC Gary Watts, and State Adjutant Travis Flisrand. PDC Rick MacDonald was not available. Since there were no resolutions received at the State Convention in 2017 requiring Legislative action, we recapped the Legislative achievements of 2017.

At the SD Veterans Council meeting held on November 8 in Sioux Falls, all of the Veteran Service Organizations, including the American Legion, VFW, DAV, PVA, Vietnam Veterans of America and Purple Heart have taken a united stand in the efforts to create SD Veterans Cemetery near Sioux Falls. This is the first time all of the VSO organizations have united on a single issue.

Three Legislative Roundtables were held in November in preparation for the 2018 legislative season. These roundtable discussions were held in Watertown on November 17th, Sioux Falls on November 16th, and Rapid City on November 18th. Legislative Roundtables are set up each year for the members of the South Dakota Veterans Council to present their agendas to members of the legislature. All Legionnaires are invited and encouraged to attend.

The Legislative Committee met again at Pierre Post 8 on January 17th, 2018 to discuss legislation being introduced in the 2018 legislative session. Present at this meeting was Chairman Mark Weinmann, PDC Rod Martens, PDC Rick MacDonald, PDC Gary Watts, Lobbyists Royce Loesch, Doug Feltman, Commander Hughes, and Department Adjutant Travis Flisrand. Also present were many leaders and members of the SD American Legion. These meetings are open to all interested Legionnaires and all are welcome and encouraged to attend.

The legislative reception was held the evening of January 17th and was well attended by Legislators and Legionnaires alike. Our caps are off to the members of Post 8 for their hospitality, and for making the legislative reception a huge success. Since there were no legislative issues brought forth by the American Legion, we set our eyes on other legislative platform brought forth concerning Veterans.

HB 1009—To revise certain provisions regarding the administration provided to veterans.
This bill was signed by the Governor.

HB1010—Revise certain provisions regarding federal protections for National Guard members ordered to active duty
This bill was signed by the Governor.

HB 1025—Revise the qualifications for county veteran service officers.
This bill was deferred to the 41st legislative day

HB 1043—Authorization the construction of a National Guard Readiness Center at the Rapid City Airport.
This bill was signed by the Governor

HB 1244—Revise certain provisions regarding the renewal of driver license by a member of the Armed Forces and their families.
This bill was signed by the Governor.

SB 83—Authorize certain patriotic societies access to public schools.
This bill was signed by the Governor.

SB 91—Authorize the Department of Veteran Affairs to provide for the design, construction and equipping of a state veterans cemetery in Minnehaha County, to create a veterans cemetery fund, to make an appropriation therefore, and to declare an emergency.
This bill was signed by the Governor.

SB 97—To provide a special motor vehicle license plate for certain women veterans.
This bill was signed by the Governor.

SC 1—This House Commemoration honors our 2017 Boys State Governor --Bridge Gordon of Whitewood and the 2017 Girls State Governor Rhumastra Tereeda of Sioux Falls, and commending the South Dakota American Legion and Auxiliary for their sponsorship and coordination of the Girls State and Boys State programs.

SCR 15—Making formal application to the United States Congress to lawfully change the medical enrollment criteria for the Veterans Health Administration, to include all who served in WW II and the Korean War and who received an honorable discharge or discharge under honorable conditions for their service regardless of current income status.
The Senate adopted this resolution, the House of Representatives concurred.

I would like to thank members of the Legislative committee and especially our Lobbyists- Royce Loesch, Adjutant Travis Flisrand and Doug Feltman who put in a lot of time, effort and travel to make sure our SD members are heard. Also present were many leaders and members of the SD American Legion.

For more information about screenings for local American Legion posts, contact GroupSales@FunAcademyStudios.com.

Respectfully submitted,
Mark Weinmann
Chairman, Department Legislative Committee

State of South Dakota Offers Veteran Bonus

PIERRE, S.D.

If you served with the Armed Forces any time after Aug. 2, 1990, or are currently active duty military, the State of South Dakota and South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs want to say thank you!

The Department administers a bonus program for those who were legal residents of the state for no less than six months prior to their active duty service and who meet other qualifications.

In the past 14 years, the department has made bonus payments of up to $500 to more than 9,400 service members for their active duty service after Jan. 1, 1993, through today. Since 2005, bonus awards have also been made to over 880 service members activated from Aug. 2, 1990, to Dec. 31, 1992.

Bonus payments cannot be paid for Active Duty for training.

Read more about the state’s Armed Forces bonus under the “Benefits” tab on the Department website at http://vetfairsts.gov, contact your local county or tribal veterans service office, or call the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs at 605-773-7251.

Commander Holmes,
The Employment Committee can report a so-so 2017-2018 American Legion year as we were not able to award each of the employment awards.

The Employer of Veterans Award has 2 winners. First for the small employer (50 or fewer employees) Veterans award went to Herreid Lumber of Herreid, SD. The nomination was made by the Jacob A. Heinrich Post 170 of Herreid. The large Veteran Hiring award winner (201 plus) goes to 3M of Aberdeen, SD. This nomination was submitted by Sidney L. Smith Post 24 of Aberdeen.

Congratulations to each employer for hiring veterans. No nominations were received for Hiring of the Disabled nor for Older Workers.

The Employment Committee for this past year is: Earl Schultz, Aberdeen; Bob King, Hermosa; Leon Josephson, Arlington; Rick Gulya, Watertown; Nicole Renner, Aberdeen. and myself of Aberdeen. Thank you for agreeing to serve the American Legion!

Thank you Commander for allowing me to serve as the employment chair. Please make a Post resolution to seek out employers who hire Veterans. Older Workers and The Disabled. This is a excellent way to recognize and show your appreciation of their hiring practices.

Respectfully submitted,
Gary Warne
Employment Committee Chair

Fun Academy Motion Pictures is offering American Legion post nationwide opportunities to screen the critically acclaimed animated family film "Sgt. Stubby: An American Hero" beginning Memorial Day weekend (May 25) and continuing through Veterans Day (Nov. 11), with the help of veterans-outreach 501(c)(3) nonprofit VetFlicks.org.

This heartwarming story has a real American Legion connection. Sgt. Stubby, who was smuggled into France and served on the front line in World War I, became famous for warning his unit of a gas attack, saving lives on the battlefield and even capturing a German prisoner. Following the war, Stubby marched in multiple Legion national convention parades, including the inaugural one in 1919 in Minneapolis. He was an official member of Eddy-Glover American Legion Post 6 in Connecticut, the only known canine to ever become an official member of the Legion.

For more information about screenings for local American Legion posts, contact GroupSales@FunAcademyStudios.com.

Respectfully submitted,
Mark Weinmann
Chairman, Department Legislative Committee

National Convention Room and Parking Rates

At this year’s National Convention, the Department of South Dakota has a block of rooms reserved at the Hyatt Regency Minneapolis. Below is the room and parking rates for all attendees:

Room rate is $137.00 Total Including Tax (1 Person Flat Rate) $155.02
Additional occupant in room $25

Current valet parking rates:
- Early Bird Parking: Enter between 6:00am - 8:00am, Leave before 8:00 pm - $7.00 Monday through Friday only
- Regular Parking: $0.00 to $20.00 per day
- Valet Parking: $20.00 to $30.00 per day

Additional occupant in room $25

Fun Academy Motion Pictures is offering American Legion post nationwide opportunities to screen the critically acclaimed animated family film "Sgt. Stubby: An American Hero" beginning Memorial Day weekend (May 25) and continuing through Veterans Day (Nov. 11), with the help of veterans-outreach 501(c)(3) nonprofit VetFlicks.org.

This heartwarming story has a real American Legion connection. Sgt. Stubby, who was smuggled into France and served on the front line in World War I, became famous for warning his unit of a gas attack, saving lives on the battlefield and even capturing a German prisoner. Following the war, Stubby marched in multiple Legion national convention parades, including the inaugural one in 1919 in Minneapolis. He was an official member of Eddy-Glover American Legion Post 6 in Connecticut, the only known canine to ever become an official member of the Legion.

For more information about screenings for local American Legion posts, contact GroupSales@FunAcademyStudios.com.

Respectfully submitted,
Mark Weinmann
Chairman, Department Legislative Committee

‘Sgt. Stubby: An American Hero’
Local Screenings Offered to American Legion Posts
An American Legion Americanism Pillar such as the High School Oratorical Contest. More than 6,000 high school students begin competition annually at The American Legion National Oratorical Contest. Griffin Smith of Spearfish, South Dakota, was one of nine top high school orators. Griffin started the weekend as one of 53 state or department champions in the competition. Griffin competed in the American Legion National Oratorical Contest along with 53 other contestants and got into the semi-finals. The Youth Trooper academy program continues to grow. We are searching for ways to let school staff in every school in the state know of the availability of American Legion programs. We are using social media and electronic notices to reduce postage costs. Twenty Four High School Junior and Senior Girls and Boys will be invited to participate in a week long experience at the SD Department of Criminal Investigation facility in Pierre in June. Thank you to Larry Price for your leadership as liaison with the South Dakota Highway Patrol.

Youth Trooper Academy has been accomplished from their smart phones or computers. The Youth Trooper Academy program continues to flourish. Our Department wins competed in The American Legion National Oratorical Contest along with 53 other contestants and got into the semi-finals. The Youth Trooper academy program continues to grow. We are searching for ways to let school staff in every school in the state know of the availability of American Legion programs. We are using social media and electronic notices to reduce postage costs. Twenty Four High School Junior and Senior Girls and Boys will be invited to participate in a week long experience at the SD Department of Criminal Investigation facility in Pierre in June. Thank you to Larry Price for your leadership as liaison with the South Dakota Highway Patrol.

Youth Trooper Academy has been accomplished from their smart phones or computers. The Youth Trooper academy program continues to flourish. Our Department wins competed in The American Legion National Oratorical Contest along with 53 other contestants and got into the semi-finals. The Youth Trooper academy program continues to grow. We are searching for ways to let school staff in every school in the state know of the availability of American Legion programs. We are using social media and electronic notices to reduce postage costs. Twenty Four High School Junior and Senior Girls and Boys will be invited to participate in a week long experience at the SD Department of Criminal Investigation facility in Pierre in June. Thank you to Larry Price for your leadership as liaison with the South Dakota Highway Patrol.

Youth Trooper Academy has been accomplished from their smart phones or computers. The Youth Trooper academy program continues to flourish. Our Department wins competed in The American Legion National Oratorical Contest along with 53 other contestants and got into the semi-finals. The Youth Trooper academy program continues to grow. We are searching for ways to let school staff in every school in the state know of the availability of American Legion programs. We are using social media and electronic notices to reduce postage costs. Twenty Four High School Junior and Senior Girls and Boys will be invited to participate in a week long experience at the SD Department of Criminal Investigation facility in Pierre in June. Thank you to Larry Price for your leadership as liaison with the South Dakota Highway Patrol.

Youth Trooper Academy has been accomplished from their smart phones or computers. The Youth Trooper academy program continues to flourish. Our Department wins competed in The American Legion National Oratorical Contest along with 53 other contestants and got into the semi-finals. The Youth Trooper academy program continues to grow. We are searching for ways to let school staff in every school in the state know of the availability of American Legion programs. We are using social media and electronic notices to reduce postage costs. Twenty Four High School Junior and Senior Girls and Boys will be invited to participate in a week long experience at the SD Department of Criminal Investigation facility in Pierre in June. Thank you to Larry Price for your leadership as liaison with the South Dakota Highway Patrol.

Youth Trooper Academy has been accomplished from their smart phones or computers. The Youth Trooper academy program continues to flourish. Our Department wins competed in The American Legion National Oratorical Contest along with 53 other contestants and got into the semi-finals. The Youth Trooper academy program continues to grow. We are searching for ways to let school staff in every school in the state know of the availability of American Legion programs. We are using social media and electronic notices to reduce postage costs. Twenty Four High School Junior and Senior Girls and Boys will be invited to participate in a week long experience at the SD Department of Criminal Investigation facility in Pierre in June. Thank you to Larry Price for your leadership as liaison with the South Dakota Highway Patrol.

Youth Trooper Academy has been accomplished from their smart phones or computers. The Youth Trooper academy program continues to flourish. Our Department wins competed in The American Legion National Oratorical Contest along with 53 other contestants and got into the semi-finals. The Youth Trooper academy program continues to grow. We are searching for ways to let school staff in every school in the state know of the availability of American Legion programs. We are using social media and electronic notices to reduce postage costs. Twenty Four High School Junior and Senior Girls and Boys will be invited to participate in a week long experience at the SD Department of Criminal Investigation facility in Pierre in June. Thank you to Larry Price for your leadership as liaison with the South Dakota Highway Patrol. The Department is always looking for ways to cut costs and increase revenue. This year the Department renewed a one-year contract with Patriot Fundraising for the fundraising program that guarantees the Department $50,000 for 6 mailings, to include 2 sweepstakes. The company is based out of Tulsa, Oklahoma, this return address has confused many of legionnaires, but I am here to report that the money donated and sent to a return address in Oklahoma is legit.

Another way the Department has been saving money is through Department Standing Committee Meetings using conference calls. The Department uses Conference call meetings through a subscription of GoToMeeting.com. Not only time for many members of the American Legion has been saved but also money on reimbursement costs for transportation and food. The VAVS Committee, South Dakota American Legion Foundation, Boys State Corporation, 100th Anniversary Committee and other committees have used this conference call meeting during this past year. We are expanding on this technology side by adding in live streaming of events with an internet enabled camera. Not only will be able to stream events for members to tune into and get information, but our training team and our Commander can stream training to more legionnaires across the State of South Dakota and around the world. This will save a fair amount of travel expenses and increase communication within our Department. I know not every post is up to speed with watching videos on the internet, but I hope that neighboring Posts who have this ability will invite others in who do not.

State Headquarters Staff has had its hands full this year. With the retirement of the Department Service Officer Warren Aas and the uncertain resignation of the Assistant Adjutant, a great deal of the work was done by my keystone of our office Judy, and myself. I must say that without Judy there assisting with everything, reminding me of what I have missed and being a great moral support to keep my spirits up with all the facets of this job and limited staff, I would probably be in an isolation ward getting some quiet time to un-stress myself. I cannot thank Judy enough for all that she has done for me in the past year. I welcome aboard Mrs. MaryJo Boner to our team, she has proven her dedication to our organization by being the Unit President of Castlewood Unit #250 for the past 8 years. I know she will quickly become another keystone to the Headquarters staff in the near future. Our Department Service Officer position has been filled on a part time basis by Courtney Van Zanten, she has been a great help to me over the past 4 months and worked well filling in with the retirement of Warren Aas.

Mr. Commander, since most of the Committee Chairs and State Officers have filed complete reports published in the June issue of the South Dakota Legion News, most of the activities of the Department have been covered and reported on. I would like to congratulate you on a very successful year. It has truly been a privilege having you as my first Commander, you have left some very big shoes for your successors to fill.

Respectfully submitted,

Travis Flisrand

State Adjutant
VA Pushes Forward With Move Towards Whole Health Care

SiouxFalls VA MedicalCenter is the only site in the country that is moving towards implementing a whole health system. VA facilities in other locations are in various stages of implementation. The whole health approach takes a whole person approach to health care, focusing on the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being of the patient. This approach is aimed at improving outcomes and reducing costs. The Sioux Falls VA Medical Center is leading the way in this approach, with other VA facilities following suit.

The Sioux Falls VA Medical Center is designated as a Whole Health Design Site, which means that it is leading the way in the implementation of whole health care. This designation is given to facilities that are making significant progress in implementing whole health care. The Sioux Falls VA Medical Center has been selected as a Whole Health Design Site for 2018, as part of a national effort to expand whole health care to all VA facilities.

Whole health care includes a number of different components, including mental health, physical health, and social determinants of health. The goal is to provide a more holistic approach to health care, one that takes into account the patient’s overall well-being. This approach is expected to lead to better outcomes, reduced costs, and improved patient satisfaction.

The Sioux Falls VA Medical Center is leading the way in this approach, with other VA facilities following suit. The whole health approach is expected to lead to better outcomes, reduced costs, and improved patient satisfaction.

The Legacy Run, a cross-country motorcycle ride organized by the Legion Riders, raises money every year for The American Legion Legacy Scholarship Fund. The Fund provides college assistance for the children of U.S. military personnel killed on active duty or on or after Sept. 11, 2001, as well as children of post-9/11 veterans with a combined VA disability rating of 50 percent or higher.

This year’s Legacy Run will be held Aug. 19th-23rd, with registration and briefings on the 18th. The Legacy Run will leave Hutchinson, Kan. – where Post 68 will host kickoff events – on Aug. 19 and arrive in Minneapolis for the 2018 National Convention. The ride will make stops in Missouri, Iowa and Wisconsin before finishing Aug. 23 at Anoka Post 102 in Minnesota.

The highlights of the trip will include the National WWI Museum and Memorial in Kansas City, MO; the American Legion Memorial Fountain in Kansas City, MO; the Harry S. Truman Presidential Library in Independence, MO; the Soldiers Field Veterans Memorial, MN; Spahn Museum, MN; Hormel Historic Home, MN; Mower County Historical Society Ft. Snelling Cemetery and Veterans Home, MN; and a few other surprises.

Each day, riders will eat both lunch and dinner at an American Legion Post, and all Posts except one are 1919-1920 Chartered Posts in honor of the Centennial year. The daily post schedule is as follows: Aug. 19 – Department Hutchinson, Kan., Post 68; lunch and dinner stops in Independence, Mo., Post 21, Aug. 20 – Lunch stop at Post 100, Maryville, MO; dinner stop at Spencer Post 1, IA, Aug. 21 – Lunch stop at Post 56, Albert Lea, MN; dinner hog roast hosted by ALR Chapter 91, Austin, MN, Aug. 22 – Lunch at Post 92, Rochester, MN; dinner stop at Post 336, Onalaska, WI.

This year, any American Legion Riders and supporters who cannot attend the Legacy Run can register as a “Supporter” for $200.00. All Supporter registrants will receive a specially minted 2018-2019 Centennial Legacy Run Pin, patch set and some other surprises.

The 2017 Legacy Run raised a record $1,224,653 – the fourth straight year the ride raised more than $1 million. Help make 2018 just as great, if not better. Register at www.legion.org/riders, and Ride for the Kids!
June 2018

SOUTH DAKOTA LEGION NEWS

ANNUAL COMMITTEE REPORTS

These Annual Committee Reports are submitted and printed in the South Dakota Legion News in accordance with Article IV, Section 4 of The American Legion Department of South Dakota Constitution.

Warren L. Aas
Chairman, VA&R Committee

On behalf of the Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Committee, which consists of Chairman Warren Aas, Harry Huffman Jr. of Ethan, Loyson Carda of Lemmon, Ron Holloway of Roscoe and Dan Scoblic of Big Stone City, it gives me great pleasure to present the following VA&R report.

The Veterans Administration (VA) continues to operate the nation’s largest integrated health care system with more than 1,700 hospitals, clinics, community living centers, domiciliaries, readjustment counseling centers, and other facilities. Here in South Dakota, we are proud to have the Sioux Falls Health Care System in Sioux Falls and the Black Hills VA Health Care System in Hot Springs and Sturgis (Fort Meade).

The VA operates 131 national cemeteries in the U.S. and Puerto Rico. Burial and memorial benefits are also available for eligible service members, Veterans, and family members. You are always welcome to contact your County or Tribal Veterans Service Officer to inquire about headstones, markers & medallions, or ordering presidential memorial certificates.

We are very excited that Courtney has accepted the responsibilities as our new Department Service Officer. She will do an awesome job keeping us informed on the latest news coming from the VA as well as those grants that are not only the veteran families last resort, but the stepping stone to help them back on their feet.

If you have a veteran family possibly in need, please take a moment to reach out to them about the Temporary Financial Assistance grant and how to apply if warranted. Applications can be obtained through the Department Headquarters website at https://www.sdl legion.org/form/sd-american-legion-tfa-form/ or you can contact me at 605-695-9122. Remember the applications start at post level and with YOU! Your the key to connecting us, and I will, with the utmost speed, continue the process of determining eligibility and granting assistance.

The Children & Youth program over the past year or so has had the pleasure of helping several families. In 2017, we had $3034.83 given out in grants, and so far $4750.27 in 2018. I also like to mention that, for the first time in many years, we submitted a National Temporary Financial Assistance application for a maximum of $1,500 and it was approved! That individual family received a grant at maximum state and national level totaling $3,000.

This past fall, I decided I wanted to do something extra to spread the message of the Children & Youth programs across South Dakota. I particularly wanted to reach out to younger families, to let them know we care about the next generation. With this thought in mind, I established the backpack initiative. The American Legion Children & Youth teamed up with the Auxiliary Children & Youth to make the most of the vision. Ready to be filled are 100 backpacks that the Auxiliary will stuff with school supplies.

If you or your post would like to donate extra backpacks or supplies please contact me directly. I would like to have them distributed by the second week in August, as school starting dates vary from across the state. I truly believe this backpack initiative is a small act, however, it’s a great step in the right direction to show our support to our youth and their education.

This past year, as the Children & Youth Chairperson I have grown to appreciate each and every youth program, as each one highlights a child’s strengths and pushes them towards a brighter future. Encourage your community to team up with the Auxiliary Children & Youth to make the most of the vision. Ready to be filled are 100 backpacks that the Auxiliary will stuff with school supplies.

Operation Black Hills Cabin: A Way to Say Thank you to Veterans

When a service member is permanently injured, the whole family is injured. The entire structure of the family unit is forever changed with the wife and children often becoming the around-the-clock caregivers. Their “family time” takes a back seat to the recovery process. “TIME” is the word heard over and over that is of the utmost importance to the families. What Operation Black Hills Cabin is offering is quality time - whether it is time spent on an outing such as visiting the patriotic ambiance at Mt. Rushmore or sharing quiet times on the deck watching the abundant wildlife of the Black Hills. The one-week respite in the 1,200 square foot, 3-bedroom, 2 bathroom, fully furnished and fully handicap accessible cabin includes no television or computer; only board games, puzzles, playing cards and outdoor games that families can enjoy together. In addition, they are provided with coupons for free meals, free admission to many popular Black Hills attractions and many other recreational opportunities due to the generosity of many community partners. They are able to enjoy as many, or as few, activities as they would like as or as their injuries allow. These families can not bear the burden of all the planning or expense to put together an outing such as this. The cabin offers them the opportunity to reconnect, have some “fun” and create priceless memories of their quality time together.

Operation Black Hills Cabin is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization whose mission is to provide a comfortable, peaceful and supportive respite to qualified, combat-injured veterans and their families, from the Iraq/Afghanistan operations, in their rehabilitation from their traumatic and stressful experiences while serving the interests of our Nation.

Further, the program will provide an opportunity to the disabled veteran to reacquaint themselves with their family, enrich and enhance their lives and create lasting memories in a quiet, leisurely environment with little or no cost to them.

The following are eligible to apply for a stay at Operation Black Hills Cabin: Active Duty service members and Veterans who served in Operation Enduring Freedom; Operation Iraqi Freedom; Operation New Dawn, who were Combat Injured at a minimum of 30% OR a Medal of Honor Recipient from OEF, OIF or OND OR Warrior Transition Unit (WTU) members. Include a copy of orders with the assignment to WTU, AND a signed statement from the applicant's primary physician on the physician's letterhead with the physician's contact information, and stating the member is pending a Statement of Disability with an anticipated rating of at least 30% due to Combat Injuries along with the type of disability. The application and other information about the program can be found at www.operationblackhillscabin.org.
ANNUAL COMMITTEE REPORTS

These Annual Committee Reports are submitted and printed in the South Dakota Legion News in accordance with Article IV, Section 4 of The American Legion Department of South Dakota Constitution.

Commander,

The 2018 Session of the South Dakota American Legion Boys State Program will begin Sunday May 27th with Staff Training. The Boys State attendees will arrive Monday May 28th and remain until the closing ceremony on Friday June 1st 2018.

Northern State University continues to upgrade their facilities and will do so for the next few years. As always they happily accommodate our every need. This year’s attendance numbers will be down significantly from last year. Our projected attendance currently is at 275.

This is the third year we have used online registration. It is a great benefit for the Staff as it has reduced the man hours required to register all of our attendees. We continue to have problems getting correct if any email addresses from the Legion Posts and accepting the fact that this is not the way of the future but the way of the present.

I also feel a lack of motivation within the Posts to participate in the Boys State Program. I have called school counselors who have not registered a Boys State Delegate with questions of why no student from their school has registered. The answer I get is that they have not seen a Legion representative for one, two and in some cases three years.

A good example is Central High School in Rapid City. Last year the Counselor called the neighboring Post to see if someone would come and help her with Boys State as they had no-one participate the prior year. This counselor is a former Girl Stater and tries her best to promote the program, but had no contact from the local post in three years.

The Americanism Officer from the neighboring Post and I spent a lunch period talking to High School Juniors and handing out brochures. We got four attendees. This year we left it up to the local Post and we have no-one from that school again. This is the second largest post in the state and should be sending twenty to thirty delegates each year. This is only one example, there are a few more of the same.

Posts need to understand that this is NOT a school or counselor program. It IS a Legion program. The responsibility to promote the program is not a school or counselor responsibility. It is a Post, and Post Americanism responsibility. Until Posts take ownership of this program, unfortunately I feel our attendance numbers will continue to decline to the point where the program will cease to exist.

Thursday, 31 May is American Legion day. The Staff and attendees really look forward to this day and interacting with the Legionnaires.

The Boys State Staff, the Adjutant and the Headquarters Staff continues to perform magnificently putting together a great program for our youth. Their commitment and dedication goes above and beyond any measure I could ask for. As always they will produce a positive and memorable experience for everyone.

Respectfully submitted,

Gene Opbroek
Director, South Dakota Boys State Program

Commander,

The Educational Loan Committee consist of Mike Elsbery of Tyndall, Commander Hugh Holmes of Mitchell and Jerry Mencke of Huron.

With Educational Loan Applications due December 1st we received two loan applications. Both applicants were asking for their second loan of $1,500. We already have their high school transcripts, all we needed was their first semester transcripts and second semester schedule. By asking for first semester transcripts and second semester schedule, we were more than ensured that they will continue in higher education. Both loans were approved through the email system.

Just a couple of comments about the loan program. The loan program is self-sustaining. Loan repayment must start 90 days after graduation or drop out of school. Interest rate is 3% if payment starts within the 90 days otherwise rate changes to 8%.

I think that more students should take advantage of the program. Applications and brochures are available online at State Headquarters website, www.sdlegion.org. We should also see more teachers names being submitted. Latin teacher Lynn Marie Thomason at Sioux Falls Lincoln High School was selected as South Dakota American Educator of the Year.

The Education Loan Committee expresses our thanks for the memorials and donations. Thanks to the Department Executive Committee, State Headquarters, American Legion Posts, Auxiliary Units and many individuals.

Commander Thank You for letting me be Chairman of the Education Loan Committee.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jerry Mencke
Chairman, Department Educational Loan Committee

Commander,

Steven B. Brooks
American Legion HQ

Legionnaire Felicia Rawls participated in her first Rolling Thunder last weekend. It will not be her last, thanks to both her overall experience and making a very special new friend.

Rawls, a Navy veteran and founding member of American Legion Riders Chapter 347 in Lady Lake, Fla., promised a fellow Legionnaire that while up in the D.C. area she’d visit the friend’s son, who is buried in Arlington National Cemetery.

“Not knowing where his grave was, I had to walk over a mile and a half to get to his gravestone,” Rawls said. “It was so hot, but the whole time I was walking I was thinking. ‘This is worth it. He laid down his life for me so that I can walk this far in this heat to pay my respects.’ And I did. I just sat there and I talked to him. I told him, ‘I don’t know who you are. I know your father, but I want to thank you for giving your life for me.’ It was a very, very emotional time. I felt like I met a new brother. He was there in my heart. I really feel a connection, and I will go visit him next year.”

Rawls’ experience was one of several emotional moments experienced by Legion Riders attending Rolling Thunder, which started 31 years ago to bring awareness to the U.S.’s prisoners of wars and missing in action; that number now stands at 82,000 since World War II. What was thought to be approaching 500,000 motorcycles rode in from all over the nation, gathering in the Pentagon parking lot and then traveling down Constitution Avenue, turning at Third Street and then finishing up along Independence Avenue.

Thousands of supporters stood along the route, holding signs, waving U.S. flags and clapping as the motorcycles passed by. “Seeing that kind of support stirred emotions in Rawls. “Seeing all of these people out and waving at us and supporting the veterans, it kind of gives hope that our nation still does have people that care and respect those... that have served,” Rawls said. “It was overwhelming.”

The Riders also got an impressive sendoff from Fairfax, Va., where hundreds of area residents stood along Fairfax Boulevard and Nutley Street before the procession got onto I-66 East. There, every overpass also featured dozens of supporters, again waving flags and cheering.

That support wasn’t lost on Henderson, Nev., Post 40 Legion Riders Phil Perlman and Kathleen Jordan, who rode 2,500 miles to participate in their first Rolling Thunder. “That was awesome,” Jordan said. “All the people on the bridges—and on each bridge there was someone there.”

Jordan also was impressed with the hospitality provided by Post 177 in Fairfax, which for the seventh year hosted or facilitated multiple events for the close to 200 Legion Riders and their passengers who made it to the post. “All the people at the post are so friendly and so helpful,” Jordan said. “When they know that you’re from out of town, they do the best they can to accommodate any needs or answer any questions we have.”

Rolling Thunder: ‘It was overwhelming'
South Dakota Riders Take Part in POW/MIA Awareness Ride

Chapter 164 Legion Riders Fred & Micheline Nelson, Jim & Ginger Childers and Mike & Charlene Kain visit Arlington National Cemetery as part of Rolling Thunder.

Respectfully submitted,

Jerry Mencke
Chairman, Department Educational Loan Committee

Continued on page 12...
SOUTHDAKOTA LEGION NEWS

ANNUAL COMMITTEE REPORTS

These Annual Committee Reports are submitted and printed in the South Dakota Legion News in accordance with Article IV, Section 4 of The American Legion Department of South Dakota Constitution.

SOUTHDAKOTA AMERICAN LEGION

EDUCATIONAL LOAN COMMITTEE
FINANCIAL REPORT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Balance, 5-1-17</th>
<th>$117,081.10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RECEIPTS:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loan Repayments</td>
<td>$11,045.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest</td>
<td>$36.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memorials and Donations</td>
<td>$488.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL DISBURSEMENTS:</td>
<td>$11,569.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Loans</td>
<td>$3,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL:</td>
<td>$3,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balance, 5-1-18</td>
<td>$125,650.95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

VAVS COMMITTEE FINANCIAL REPORT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Balance, 5-1-17</th>
<th>$4,296.75</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RECEIPTS:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From General Fund</td>
<td>$1,800.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest</td>
<td>$1.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memorials and Donations</td>
<td>$3600.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL DISBURSEMENTS:</td>
<td>$5,401.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VA Facilities</td>
<td>$5,600.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL:</td>
<td>$5,600.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balance, 5-1-18</td>
<td>$4,098.69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ATHLETIC COMMISSION FINANCIAL REPORT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Balance, 5-1-17</th>
<th>$18,300.25</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RECEIPTS:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entry Fees</td>
<td>$7,200.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest</td>
<td>$5.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL:</td>
<td>$7,205.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL DISBURSEMENTS:</td>
<td>$7,205.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scholarship</td>
<td>$500.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commission Expenses</td>
<td>$7,746.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL:</td>
<td>$8,246.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balance, 5-1-18</td>
<td>$17,259.39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CHILDREN AND YOUTH FINANCIAL REPORT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Balance, 5-1-17</th>
<th>$25,389.23</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RECEIPTS:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest</td>
<td>$7.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL:</td>
<td>$7.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL DISBURSEMENTS:</td>
<td>$25,396.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TFAs:</td>
<td>$5,242.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL:</td>
<td>$5,242.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balance, 5-1-18</td>
<td>$20,153.40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

MEMBERSHIP CHAIRMAN FINANCIAL REPORT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Budget Amount 2017-2018</th>
<th>$8,000.00</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>$8,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DISBURSEMENTS:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committee, Travel &amp; Awards</td>
<td>$6,203.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balance in Fund, 5-1-18</td>
<td>$1,796.90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

June 2018
May 28-June 1: Boys State, Northern State University, Aberdeen
5: Deadline for State Convention Resolutions to State Headquarters
5: Deadline for National Legion College Applications to State HQ’s
6: D-Day
7-10: 100th Department Convention, Spearfish Convention Center
7: Department Finance Committee Meeting, Spearfish
7: Department Executive Committee Meeting, Spearfish
8: Convention Committee Meetings, Spearfish Convention Center
8: Fun Auction, Holiday Inn, Spearfish
9: Joint Legion/Auxiliary/SAL Banquet, Spearfish Convention Center
9: Department Finance Committee Meeting, Chamberlain
9: Department Executive Committee Meeting, Chamberlain
10: State Convention General Sessions, Spearfish Convention Center
10: Elections of Department Officers, Spearfish Convention Center
14: Flag Day. *This is an important membership target date.
14: U.S. Army Birthday
14-16: VFW State Convention, Sioux Falls
17: Father’s Day
25-29: Youth Trooper Academy, Pierre

July 2018
1: Deadline for Consolidated Post Reports to State Headquarters
9: Deadline for National Convention Packets to State Headquarters
7: Department Finance Committee Meeting, Chamberlain, SD
15: Department Executive Committee Meeting, Chamberlain, SD
20-28: American Legion Boys Nation, Washington, D.C.
24-28: Jr. Shooting Sports National Championship, Colorado Springs
27-31: Class B Senior State Baseball Tournament, Redfield, SD

August 2018
1-5: Class A Senior State Baseball Tournament, Pierre, SD
1-5: Class A Junior State Baseball Tournament, Mitchell, SD
3-5: Class B Junior State Baseball Tournament, Mitchell, SD
4: Coast Guard Birthday
7: Purple Heart Day
9-11: Department Service Officer School — Indianapolis, IN
9-11: National Membership Workshop — Indianapolis, IN
16-21: American Legion World Series Baseball Tourney, Shelby, NC
20-24: SDDVVA Annual Benefit School, Ramkota, Pierre
24-30: 100th Annual Legion National Convention, Minneapolis, MN

2018 American Legion Baseball Tournaments

The 2018 American Legion Baseball season is in mid-swing and the tournament locations and dates are set. If you get a chance, please come out to the ballpark and cheer on these fine young baseball players. They have worked hard all summer perfecting their baseball skills and by coming out to the ballpark and showing your support for their efforts will be rewarding.

The Class B Junior American Legion Baseball Tournament will be held August 3-5, 2018, in Winner, SD, hosted by Winner Legion Post #169.

The Class B Senior American Legion Baseball Tournament will be held July 27-31, 2018, in Redfield, SD, hosted by Redfield Legion Post #92.

The Class A Junior American Legion State Baseball Tournament is scheduled to be held August 1-5, 2018, in Mitchell, SD, hosted by Mitchell Legion Post #18.

The Class A Senior American Legion State Baseball Tournament is scheduled to be held August 1-5, 2018, in Pierre, SD, hosted by Pierre Legion Post #68.

The National Senior Regional American Legion Baseball Tournament is scheduled to be held August 8-12, 2018, in Dickinson, ND.

The 2018 92nd Annual American Legion Baseball World Series Tournament will be held August 16-21, 2018, at Keeter Stadium in Shelby, North Carolina.

Please come out and help support your local American Legion Baseball team. Your support makes this a great American Legion program.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Legion donated $1 million to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund for construction of the Wall in Washington, becoming the largest single contributor to the project.
**SOUTH DAKOTA LEGION NEWS**

**June 2018**

**Rolling Thunder**

Continued from page 10

"It’s been great," added Perlman, Chapter 40's director. "They put out a really good event here. It’s well organized. It’s a good time.

While it is a lot of work to put on an event like Post 177 does each year, ALR Chapter 177 Director Bruce Mersauer said it’s well worth it. "We always look forward to this," he said. "It’s our biggest event. We look forward to seeing everybody coming here. It is a lot of preparation and a lot of work during the weekend. But the worst thing is that it seems like the weekend is over in the flash."

Post 177 Legion Rider Michael Nicholas Sr., led the post’s Rolling Thunder escort for the previous five years before stepping away from it this year. But he was still visible and taking on a leadership position throughout the weekend. "I was just helping out where I could help out," Nicholas said. "With all the people that show up and come here from all over the country, you try to chip in where you can. I’ve done it for so long, and that’s why I keep putting in and help out."

Having hosted the event seven times, Post 177 has gotten to where mistakes don’t happen often anymore. "Guys know what to do," Nicholas said. "They step up and fill in."

While many of the Legion Riders participating in Rolling Thunder already are out of the military, they were joined again this year by current Marine Cpl. Shawn Wathen, who is stationed in Quantico and is a member of Post 28 in Triangle, Va. He was a former member of American Legion Post 136 in Arroyo Grande, Calif., where his father Bob has served as post commander.

"I just like the group, like the people," Wathen said of why he transferred his Legion membership when he moved east. "I got used to hanging around with everyone at (Post 136) and enjoyed the camaraderie. When I got out to Virginia, I wanted to find that same thing, and also the veterans services and stay involved in that type of thing."

While Wathen has spent two years heading from Fairfax to D.C. with a group of Legion Riders, a longtime Rolling Thunder participant was making her debut with the Riders. Sharon Sclachthorn, a member of Legion Post 25 in Danville, Va., made her sixth trip to Rolling Thunder, but it was the first time she’d rode with her fellow Legion Riders in Sunday’s demonstration ride. The previous five times Sclachthorn had served as an escort for a Gold Star mom.

"It was a different experience, but different in a good way," said Sclachthorn, a longtime member of the Legacy Run’s advance team. "It’s always good to be with your brothers and sisters that you know and you ride with from the Legion. There’s a core group here that does the Legacy Run … who have come in for this, too. It gave me a new appreciation for it, to be in that sea of humanity (at the Pentagon) vs. being out there on the side and kind of tucked away."

"Definitely would do it again. I really enjoyed the camaraderie. I enjoyed the patriotism. And I enjoyed meeting people and talking to people. These are some of the most dedicated people I know. Who in the world would come up here and stand in that heat for hours on end to do that ride if it wasn’t for love of country … and to let these families know their fallen aren’t forgotten."

It was the overall experience that brought Fred Nelson, a founding member of Legion Riders Chapter 164 in Spearfish, S.D., 1,800 miles for his second Rolling Thunder experience. He brought with him four other Chapter 164 Riders attending Rolling Thunder for the first time.

"There’s no other experience like it," Nelson said. "The moving experience of the candlelight vigil and then actually riding in Rolling Thunder with all the other bikers in support of the veterans and those who made the ultimate sacrifice, it was beyond belief."

---

### Membership Percentages by Posts / Districts

*As of May 14, 2018*

**DISTRICT 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POST</th>
<th>NO</th>
<th>MMB/SP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rapid</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sioux Falls</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>96.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aberdeen</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>90.38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sioux City</td>
<td>262</td>
<td>61.66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vermillion</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>68.75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chamberlain</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>66.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitchell</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>96.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hartford</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>36.36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montrose</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>22.72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garretson</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>22.22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aitkin</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>94.55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Redfield</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>93.98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colby</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>94.44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Francis</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>88.89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sturgis</td>
<td>314</td>
<td>94.55%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**DISTRICT 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POST</th>
<th>NO</th>
<th>MMB/SP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brookings</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yankton</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>69.23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Washington</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>29.31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brookings</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>68.75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitchell</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>82.35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flandreau</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>92.31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freeman</td>
<td>292</td>
<td>95.35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corsica</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>92.22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wall</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>92.86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dell Rapids</td>
<td>254</td>
<td>94.55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aberdeen</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>96.67%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**DISTRICT 3**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POST</th>
<th>NO</th>
<th>MMB/SP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Huron</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>102.86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watertown</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>94.55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rapid City</td>
<td>259</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pierre</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitchell</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tea</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>96.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethan</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**DISTRICT 4**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POST</th>
<th>NO</th>
<th>MMB/SP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lincoln</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minot</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>92.31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dickinson</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>92.86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bismarck</td>
<td>254</td>
<td>95.52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Williston</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>95.52%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**DISTRICT 5**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POST</th>
<th>NO</th>
<th>MMB/SP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jamestown</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McComb</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>92.31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bismarck</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minot</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Forks</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>99.17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**In State Headquarters, May 14, 2018**

**State Vice / District Commanders Membership Standings**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State Vice Commander</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2018 Members</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2019 Members</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dist. 1-2</td>
<td>3,617</td>
<td>2,354</td>
<td>64.89%</td>
<td>3,617</td>
<td>2,354</td>
<td>64.89%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District Commander</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2018 Members</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2019 Members</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dist. 1-2</td>
<td>1,542</td>
<td>1,458</td>
<td>94.55%</td>
<td>1,542</td>
<td>1,458</td>
<td>94.55%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**State Totals**

20,735 18,342 88.46%