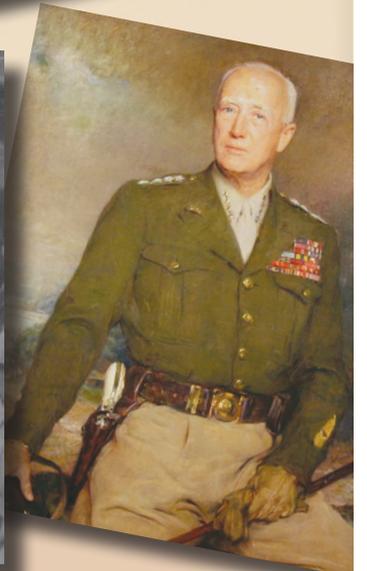
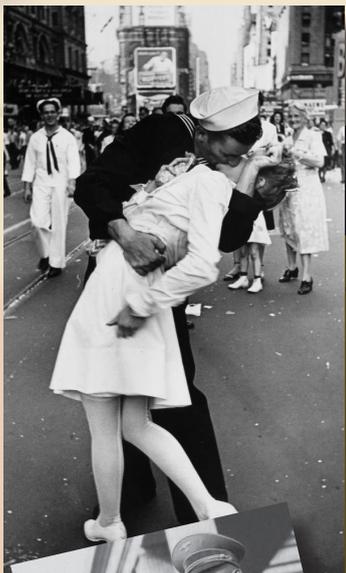


# A SALUTE TO THE CLAY COUNTY MEN & WOMEN OF THE WORLD WAR II GENERATION

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Moorhead Daily News

VOLUME 58

MOORHEAD, MINNESOTA MONDAY, DECEMBER 8, 1941

NUMBER 288

UNITED STATES AT WAR

WEATHER:  
Moorhead and vicinity—Cloudy  
tonight, Tuesday. Light snow  
Tuesday.  
High yesterday 36. Low last  
night 26. Precipitation .06.



# Roland Dille Receives 2011 Heritage Award

**By: Jacob Underlee**

Dr. Roland Dille has been named the recipient of this year's Historical and Cultural Society of Clay County Heritage Award for his contributions to local and national history, academics and community activities.

Dr. Dille will be honored at the annual HCSCC gala, to be held Friday, October 28, at 6:00 p.m. at the Hjemkomst Center.

Previous recipients of the Heritage Award included entertainer Bobby Vee, Clay County's first township of Georgetown, MN, and professor and author Hiram Drache.

Roland Dille was born and raised on a farm near Dassel, MN, a town located south of St. Cloud, in 1924. As a child he helped the family raise corn, sheep and hogs on 100 acres of land.

"We didn't know any better," Dille said of aiding in the daily chores. "But my folks were pretty good. They didn't run us into the ground."

Although he lived in the country, Dille attended school in town from kindergarten to graduation in 1942. He was active in basketball, band, choir, speech and drama.

"In small schools that's what you do," he said.

Dille broke his foot during the last basketball game of the season and was unable to fully participate in the annual senior playoffs tournament. Although he couldn't run up and down the court, he knew he could still contribute through free throws. One day while practicing in the school gymnasium he saw one of his teachers, originally from Moorhead, walking with her younger sister.

"She always talked about her kid sister," Dille said of his teacher. "So they came down and her sister said, 'Would it help if I threw the ball back to you?' Well, I married her."

That didn't happen right away, of course, but it was the first time

Dille met his future wife, Beth.

After graduation, Dille attended the University of Minnesota to pursue an interest in writing that had begun years before.

"I wanted to be a journalist," he said. "When I was 13 years old I started writing for the local newspaper."

Dille was hired as the North Dassel correspondent for the Dassel Dispatch, where he reported on the comings and goings of town residents.

"I felt pretty proud of it, sending that stuff in to the paper," he said.

Dr. Dille enrolled at the University of Minnesota following his high school graduation, along with a few friends from Dassel. He made the trip in his 1918 Nash automobile.

"It was a great car," he recalled. "And what an idiot I was. When it froze up on me I had it hauled away for the iron drive. If I had dragged it out to my dad's farm and put it in the garage, it would've been a

great thing to have."

Dille's freshman year was interrupted by the continuing overseas conflicts of WWII. Of the five Dassel graduates who attended the U of M, only one completed a full year. The rest went into the military.

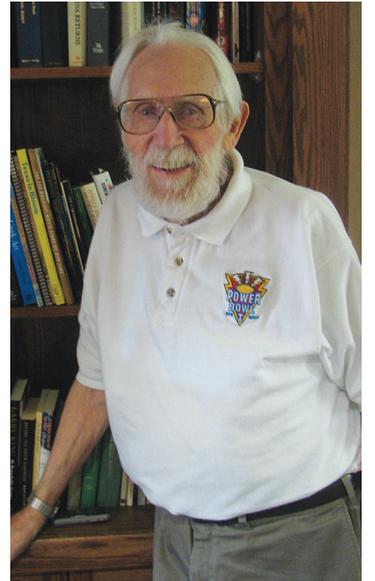
Dille was drafted in May 1943. He attended basic training at Fort Riley, KS.

"I had taken a test," he said. "A lot of us did. If you qualified, when you got in the Army they'd send you to specialized training."

Dille was sent to the University of Nebraska for six months of engineering training. However, the military decided that by the time the training was finished the war would likely be over. Instead, the men were scheduled to be sent overseas to join the fight.

At the same time, Dille considered an offer to attend dental school. His sister-in-law worked for the dean of dentistry at the University of Minnesota, who

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 30**



Teacher, veteran, writer and former college president Dr. Roland Dille grew up in Dassel, MN. He served three years in WWII, then went on to the academic field and held offices in several state and national organizations.

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## MN State Legislator Served As LST Officer

**By: Jacob Underlee**

*The following story was taken from an interview with Douglas Sillers, as well as his written war recollections.*

Doug Sillers had two brothers. One was older, one was younger. One was an Army officer, the other was in the Navy Air Corps. When Douglas volunteered for the Navy in November of 1942, all three of the Sillers boys were serving Uncle Sam during WWII.

Sillers, born in 1915, was raised on the family farm near Calvin, ND, a small town just eight miles south of the Canadian border. He completed high school and was able to secure funding to attend Concordia College, in Moorhead, MN, in the fall of 1935.

He graduated in 1939 and took a job teaching history, economics and German at a high school in Menasha, MN. There he met his wife, Margaret. The two married in 1941.

Sillers was first drafted in the spring of 1942, but was granted a deferment to help his ailing

father with the harvest. Later, in November of 1942, he volunteered for the Navy.

He was sent near Chicago to the Great Lakes Training Depot, and assigned to be a third class yeoman.

The assignment meant he was expected to handle the responsibilities of a clerk and secretary. However, Sillers already had experience with that type of work.

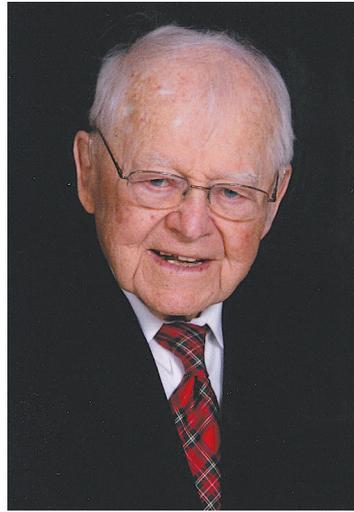
“My senior year I realized that I couldn’t do anything until I learned to type,” he said. “So I went to the principal and asked him to conduct a class after school. So the seniors took a class and we learned to type. It served me well.”

In fact, Sillers had worked for a year-and-a-half in his father’s office as a secretary after graduation, so the military assignment came naturally.

In December of 1942, Sillers was assigned to an under-construction heavy cruiser in the Boston Navy Yard. During the two months the U.S.S. Baltimore

was being built, Sillers’ wife, Margaret, came to live with him in Boston.

“It was wonderful to be together for that time,” he recalled



Douglas Sillers served three years in the United States Navy during WWII. After the war he farmed for over 50 years south of Moorhead.

in his personal essay of his war experiences. “I was yeoman third in charge of the executive office.”

Sillers worked to set up and manage the office of the first lieutenant.

In June of 1943 Sillers was transferred to New York. The next month he received a commission to be promoted from yeoman to ensign. At Princeton he received training in Navy regulations, flag signals and navigations, then continued to Fort Skyler, where he was named first lieutenant.

“My wife Margaret and our baby daughter, Jean, who had been born in late October, came on the train to visit me for several days,” he said. “It was a thrill to have them there.”

After his promotion, Sillers was again relocated, this time to Seneca, Ill, where a Landing Ship Tank (LST) was under construction.

The craft was completed in December 1943. After a Christmas leave, Sillers headed towards Europe on the LST 521, along

with 100 supply ships and 18 other LSTs.

Twenty-two days later he saw the coast of England.

“After arriving in England, I called Army headquarters and asked for help in locating my brother, Kip,” Sillers said. “I was able to get Kip’s contact information, and we were fortunate enough to get together several times when we were both in London.”

Sillers and the crew of the LST 521 were assigned to regularly cross the English Channel to France carrying soldiers, water, tanks, trucks and any other supplies that were needed for the war effort.

The crew’s very first trip was as part of the D-Day invasion of Normandy, France, in June of 1944.

The LST was one of 5,000 other crafts heading across the channel. They landed at Utah Beach seven hours after the invasion began.

“It was a much quieter beach

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 31**

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# Local Bombardier Captured In Germany



Dan Murphy served as a Second Lieutenant in the United States Air Corps from 1942-1945. He flew 54 combat missions as a bombardier navigator in a B-26 bomber.

**By: Jacob Underlee**

In the summer of 2003 Dan Murphy was wading through swampy ground near a small village in Germany. Along with a group of 15 others, he was searching for pieces of steel buried in the ground. Over sixty years earlier, the pieces belonged to a B-26 bomber that Murphy operated as part of a bombing crew during WWII.

Dan Murphy was born in 1922. He was the youngest of his father's 13 children. From a young age he helped farm the land near Felton, MN, that his father first homesteaded in 1878. He later enrolled in Moorhead State College, now Minnesota State University Moorhead.

Murphy decided to enlist in the military in 1942, choosing the Army Air Corps Reserve. He signed up in the middle of his third year of school, and was told he would have enough time to finish before he joined the conflict.

"I was called before that because of the heavy casualties of the American airmen," he explained. "They'd send out 80 planes and 40 would come back."

Murphy's training to become an officer took about a year. He completed basic training at Jefferson Barracks, MO, aeronautical studies at the University of Missouri, flight training at Ellington Field, TX, and bomb navigation at Childress, TX.

He received his Second Lieutenant flights wings in April of 1944.

He was assigned to fly B-26 bombers, a smaller, two-engine aircraft used in WWII along with the well-known B-17 and B-24.

"Those two carried a bigger bomb load and flew greater distances," Murphy said of the larger planes.

He met and trained with his fellow crewmen in B-26 Marauders at Barksdale Field in Shreveport, LA. Two months later they traveled to Europe on the Queen Elizabeth, a passenger ship for 2,500 people that was being used to transport up to 8,000 soldiers.

Murphy's crew joined up with the 394th Bomb Group of the 9th Air Force in southern England. They moved on to the Normandy Peninsula in France.

"Our main purpose from that time on was to provide air support and assistance to our ground troops by attacking enemy troop concentrations and their supplies," Murphy said.

The B-26 crew focused on attacking rail lines, highways and bridges to hinder the movement of German supplies. The plane's crew consisted of six men flying at altitudes of 8,000 to 12,000 feet. Each mission lasted from four to six hours.

The bombers experienced frequent attacks from German guns. Flak would often damage

the B-26, but the crew always got back okay. After one perilous mission they returned to base with over 70 holes in the body of the aircraft.

"After about 40 missions, my pilot and I started volunteering for extra missions to try to complete our tour of duty of 65," Murphy said. "We volunteered to fly so new arrivals would be able to fly with an experienced pilot and navigator."

It was during just such a mission, with Murphy and his pilot accompanying an inexperienced crew, that disaster struck.

The B-26 was on en route to Ahaus, Germany, to bomb enemy rail yards. About 20 miles from the target, the aircraft leveled off to prepare for its bombing run.

"That's when we were in danger of being shot down, when we were flying level and straight" said Murphy. "Otherwise we were doing evasive action."

German flak erupted around the aircraft. One strike hit a gas line, causing the left engine to start on fire. Seeing the size of the blaze, the pilot ordered the crew to bail out of the B-26. The eight crew members parachuted down into enemy territory, landing in separate parts of the German countryside.

Murphy's parachute got tangled in telephone wires near the village of Barden. He was quickly found, but not by German soldiers.

"He didn't realize the danger he was in when his parachute came down," said Ann Murphy, Dan's wife. "He was surrounded by German farmers that were very angry, with pitchforks and everything."

The farmers were furious because the Allied bombing runs had destroyed their homes and cropland. Sometimes soldiers who parachuted to safety would then be attacked or killed by disgruntled civilians.

Luckily, Murphy ended up on the land of a farmer whose son was a German soldier being held prisoner in France.

"He was hoping that they'd treat his son well, so he wouldn't let these others do anything," said Ann. "They kept chanting 'kill him, kill him.' He was very lucky that he survived."

A local WWI veteran cut Murphy free from the telephone lines and the group held him until German soldiers arrived. The only person that spoke English in the village was a fifteen-year-old boy, so the soldiers used him to question Murphy about the bomber's mission.

"They kept asking him questions about the plane, the bomb site, how many were on the plane," Ann explained. "But they were always instructed to give only their name, rank and serial number."

Murphy kept shaking his head as if he didn't understand the boy, although he clearly could. Disgusted, the soldiers brought him to the nearby village of Bardel. One by one, the crew members from the B-26 were reunited in

CONTINUED TO PAGE 35



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## Dr. Roland Dille To Be Honored At Gala



DR. ROLAND DILLE

County and the region.

Dille is MSUM's longest running president, serving from 1968-1994. He was born near Dassel, MN, and studied at the University of Minnesota, where he received a Ph.D. in English. Dille has been a long-time member of the Moorhead Rotary Club, is also a past board chair of the previous Moorhead Area Chamber of Commerce and served as a member of the boards of several historical societies, including the Historical and Cultural Society of Clay County back when it was Clay County Historical Society.

Dille was also a vital member of the Red River Heritage Society, one of the major partners responsible for building the Hjemkomst Center. During his presidency at MSUM, he co-founded Tri-College University, served as president of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, was a member of the National Council of the Humanities, and was acting chancellor of the Minnesota State University System. Dille has received many honors in his name for his contributions to MSUM, such as MSUM's Roland Dille Center for the Arts, the Roland and Beth Dille Distinguished Faculty Lecturer Award, and the Dille Fund for Excellence.

Refer to page 2 for an in depth story on Dr. Dille's military contributions and accomplishments.

For more information on the event, call 218 299-5511 or visit online at [www.hcscconline.org](http://www.hcscconline.org) or [www.facebook.com/hcsc](http://www.facebook.com/hcsc). The Hjemkomst Center is located at 202 First Avenue North in Moorhead, MN.

The Historical and Cultural Society of Clay County thank the sponsors of this event: Eventide,

MAC's and Agassiz Valley Grain, LLC.

Thank you to food sponsors: Atomic Coffee (coffee), Bennigan's (cole slaw), Breadsmith (rolls), Eagle Café (wild rice soup), Famous Dave's (BBQ pork), Garden Pavilion/One on One Catering (chocolate

zucchini cake), CJ's Kitchen (kneofla soup), Green Market (appetizers), Granite City (meatloaf), John Alexander's (meatloaf), Maxwell's (appetizers), Moorhead Country Club (vegetables), Olive Garden (salad), Oven Door Catering (lemon cake), Stop & Go (buns).



HISTORICAL & CULTURAL SOCIETY OF CLAY COUNTY

### "THE GREATEST GENERATION"

They were, according to Tom Brokaw's book, "The Greatest Generation". There are few that would argue that point.

Babies born mostly in the 1920s grew up in the Great Depression. They were forged and tempered by the events of World War II. American GIs did what they were assigned to do and they did it in a big way.



That does not mean that these GIs did so without questioning the wisdom of military leadership, without independent thought and certainly not

without a sense of humor. While the terms are now common in our language, ask your WWII vet grandpa what the acronyms "snafu", "SOS" and "fubar" actually stand for.

They came home after seeing the world, courtesy of Uncle Sam, with only one thought in mind, to settle down, raise a family and become productive citizens. They had seen enough of the horrors of war and never wanted to see anything like that again.

They came home from the wars to begin the "baby boom" of the 1940s and 1950s. They provided the leadership and worldly experience to move the United States from a self-contained agrarian society to a world power. Along the way they produced some of the most remarkable sons and daughters in the history of the world.

In this issue you are going to meet some of the people who lived through World War II and you can take a look back through their eyes. These were the veterans and their families who fought in the world war or who kept the home fires burning during the darkest days of WWII. These are the "typical" members of that generation. Some of these individuals you know, others you probably never heard of. But they, like every soldier who put on the uniform, are all heroes and we lose a few more of them every day.

Here are a few of their stories. Remember to thank these heroes for their service before it is too late.

-- Gene Prim, Publisher

**By: Brianne Carlsrud**  
Join members and friends of the Historical & Cultural Society of Clay County for a night filled with 1940s tunes, great food, and fun times at the annual fall fundraiser, "Celebrating the Greatest Generation".

This year's event is on Friday, October 28 at 6:00 p.m. at the Hjemkomst Center. Tickets are \$45 per person if purchased in advance, \$50 at the door or \$320

for a table of eight. Tickets are available in the Hjemkomst Center Heritage Gift Shop, or call 218 299-5511.

HCSCC will be honoring Dr. Roland Dille, emeritus president of Minnesota State University Moorhead (MSUM), with the 2011 Clay County Heritage Award, created to celebrate the accomplishments of those who make a meaningful contribution to the history and culture of Clay



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Information On The

**Historical  
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County's  
Gala**

Can Be Found  
On Page 71



# Hi Drache Was Navigator During Raids

By: Paul Randall and Anna George

The B-17 Flying Fortress was the most famous four engine bomber flown by the US Army Air Corps in WWII.

A total of 12,731 B-17s were produced. Approximately 4,750 were lost on combat missions. About 50 remain, with less than a dozen airworthy. One of the airworthy B-17's, the EAA's Aluminum Overcast, visited Fargo in 2009 and returned again in 2011. Paul Randall rode in the aircraft and interviewed WWII B-17 navigator Hiram Drache.

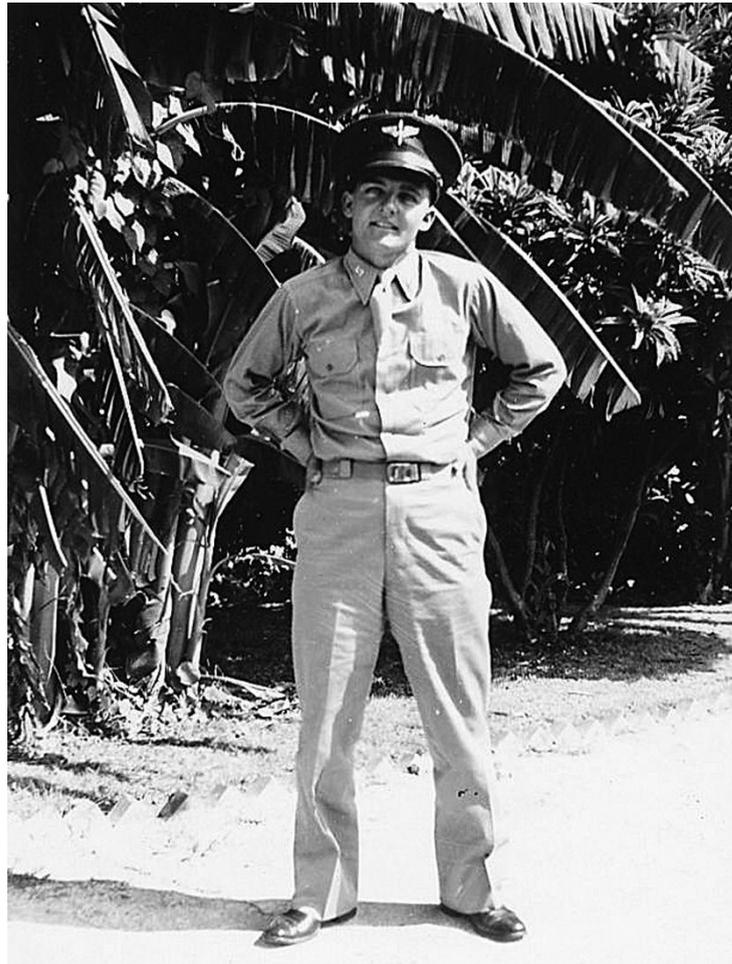
The article was originally published in the Barnesville Record-Review.

Dr. Hiram M. Drache, author of several books and college professor who taught history at Concordia College, was a navigator on the B-17 Flying Fortress, "Thy Will Be Done."

In 2010 he was honored with the Heritage Award from the Historical and Cultural Society of Clay County.

Born in 1924, Drache lived on a small farm on the edge of Meriden, MN, a one-horse-town on the railroad halfway between Owatonna and Waseca, MN.

His father owned a small trucking firm. By the age of 10, Hiram was able to dispatch with newly hired drivers and help them



be doing, Drache enrolled in Wartburg College in Waverly, IA, for summer school right after high school graduation.

He then chose to enroll in Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, MN.

Drache turned 18 in February of 1943, enlisting on the same day as 120 other Gustavus students. Overall, 600 Gustavus students enlisted the same year.

Drache had signed up for the United States Army Air Corps, which would eventually become the Air Force after World War II. On the morning of February 23, 1943, he left Minneapolis for Jefferson Barracks, MO, just south of St. Louis.

In the course of the next 15 months he was sent to bases in Michigan, Oklahoma, Nebraska, Tennessee and three different bases in Texas.

While at San Antonio, TX, Hiram was in Navigator Class 446, graduating on April 23, 1944, about 14 months after enlisting. On May 8 he was sent to Dyersburg, TN, where he met his crew. They were all disappointed when they missed D-Day on June 6, 1944.

They were trained in Dyersburg, TN, and then taken to Kearney, NB and given a plane – a brand new, spic-and-span B-17G.

While flying to Manchester, NH, on July 8, weather grounded them for two days. They then proceeded to Goose Bay, Labrador, arriving on July 11, 1944.

On July 12 Drache and his crew arrived at Meeks Field, Reykjavik, Iceland. They stayed for three days, partly due to weather, but

Dr. Hiram Drache didn't know much about war or flying when he got his First Lieutenant bars. It didn't take him long to get an education.

navigate their routes.

Trucking took him throughout southern Minnesota and surrounding states, giving him a different outlook than most of his classmates. The experience proved valuable when he became a navigator.

While Drache was in high school the Japanese attacked Pearl

Harbor on December 7, 1941. He heard about the attack on the radio. He told his father, who said, "We know where you will be going."

This gave Drache the choice to enlist or be drafted, for he would not be 18 for almost another year.

With the goal of becoming an officer and, if possible, being able to choose what he would

CONTINUED ON PAGE 28

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**VIKING**

**B-17 bombers underwent heavy enemy fire during their dangerous missions over enemy territory. Showing the battered conditions in which many aircraft returned from battle, the following damage report was filed by the crew of Drache's B-17 bomber "Thy Will Be Done," following a mission to Magdeburg, Germany, on September 28, 1944:**

VHF "C" channel inoperative  
#3 oil temperature – minimum 85° - maximum 105° during flight. Oil pressure dropping steadily.  
Right hand Tokio valve to #3 tank did not work.  
Right wheel drum damaged – tire sliced on landing; hit German bomb lying on field  
Radio operators and Tail Gunners oxygen shot out.  
Radio compass loop shot out; flux gate compass shot out.  
Inspection plate between #3 and #4 engine blown out.  
Approximately 70 holes in fuselage near tail section caused by 20 mm.  
Left horizontal stabilizer battle damage; approximately four square foot hole in left elevator.  
Cables badly frayed in left horizontal stabilizer.  
Radio room has approximately 60 holes.  
Left wing battle damage: Trailing edge of wing behind #1 engine has 20 mm burst, tearing flap and upper camber of wing about 2 foot square. Trailing edge behind #2 engine has 20 mm burst with 3 square

foot hole. Six (6) 20 mm hits on upper side of left wing. #1 engine has 20 mm burst top of nacelle. Oil cooler and oil lines shot out of #1.  
#2 engine has 20 mm burst entering wing behind supercharger and exploding behind wheel well severing hydraulic lines, control cables and puncturing oil tank.  
Gas line cut behind #2 engine and leaking gas quite badly.  
#2 propeller has 20 mm thru it.  
#2 engine feathered – no oil.  
#1 engine wind milling.  
Left aileron control shot out.  
#3 engine has oil leak.  
Counted on ship, 20 hits from 20 mm.  
Battle damage to bomb bay approximately 30 holes from 20 mm.  
Tail wheel pin sheared.  
Interphone out in tail prior to fighter attack.  
Pilots VHF cut out all other VHF and transmits carrier wave.



## Local Woman Accepted For Volunteer Service

**By: Maureen Kelly Jonason**

*This piece is a compilation of interviews conducted by Rose Andersen (undated), Dr. Terry Shoptaugh for the Northwest Minnesota Historical Center April 14, 1992), and Maureen Kelly Jonason, July 6, 2011.*

Marrion Jahnke was born in Devils Lake, ND in 1924 and grew up in Rocklake, ND, the daughter of pioneer merchant Carl Jahnke. Like other offspring of shopkeepers, she grew up behind the counter: "I learned to make change before I went to school. I worked the candy counter," she said.

Graduating from Rock Lake in 1942, Marrion had no interest in being a secretary, a teacher or a nurse. Because so many men were at war, women were recruited to work. She had taken a required vocations course and decided Occupational Therapy was the field for her. She attended Grays Harbor Junior College in Aberdeen, Washington, because her sister already lived and worked there. Though she wanted to be in a helping field, she discovered that the sciences did not interest her; her real passion was politics and history.

Her interests began with her maternal grandmother, a Scottish immigrant, who was "extremely well informed. She taught me politics really," Marrion recalled. "She couldn't stand Franklin Roosevelt!"

Once, in high school, one of Marrion's mentors in local politics, E.J. Langley, brought ND legislator Gerald Nye to visit her while her head was under a dryer at the beauty parlor!

Marrion also credited a remarkable history teacher, Harold Sheets, for insisting his students keep up on current events. Marrion remembered very distinctly a *Life* magazine article about Mothers Against the War. She was aware of the conflicts overseas at the time of the bombing of Pearl Harbor. That night was embedded in her memory:

"Our Sunday dinner was finished, and we had put our good dishes away. All my sisters had drifted on to their own activities. My dad had his day off and he was napping on the couch. My mother was at a Sunday School teachers' meeting. I was curled up in a rocking chair reading the new issue of *Life*. I had just finished reading an article by Clare Booth, on General Douglas MacArthur and our strong-hold in Corregidor. They used to have a picture of the week, a full-page picture, and the picture that Sunday was of



Mrs. Marrion Jahnke Walsh recently donated her uniform to NDSU Emily Reynolds Collection.

two Japanese envoys who came to America to negotiate. They sat there with their striped pants on, as I recall it. I remember thinking, Me thinks you smile too much! or something, the inscrutable Japanese. I was looking through the magazine and our front door just flew open and my mother just flew in shouting, 'Get up, get the radio on, we are at war!' My mother never shouted and she would never fly in. It was so untypical. . . . We were glued to the radio until midnight," Walsh recalled.

Marrion initially helped the war effort by knitting khaki caps and scarves to go into care packages for the soldiers.

The rationing system went into play soon, and that drove her father nuts. To make fruitcake, they had to save up for the dozen eggs the recipe called for. She remembered shortages of rubber and gas. Once, when her father got poison ivy, he had to go to the draft board for enough gas ration coupons to go to the doctor in Cando.

After completing one year in Washington, she returned and attended North Dakota

Agricultural College for a year before deciding with a friend that it was time to do something.

"Things were happening out there and we didn't want to sit on the sidelines. We wanted to be a part of it. So we decided we would join the Navy. That is just what we did," Walsh said.

They chose the Navy because they felt it was "a little more exclusive than the army." She

joined 62 other women from ND who enlisted in the WAVES. Such an opportunity was new to women at this time.

The WAVES – Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service—were considered to be in the regular Navy. They replaced the men who were going out to sea. Marrion recalled that she met the man she was replacing, and he was unimpressed because she was a lower rank!

It was 1944, she was 20 years old, and off she and her friend went to New York City. Six weeks of boot camp training took place at Hunter College where she learned Navy terminology and aircraft identification as well as being drilled and exercised.

She also learned discipline. Lights out at 21:30 meant 9:30 "and not one word thereafter! . . . I learned to lace a bunk so tightly you could bounce a coin. . . I learned about the white glove inspection the hard way."

Marrion got into trouble more than once. "I was supposed to wash the woodwork. Well, I was the only one tall enough to reach the wooded molding in the hall and nobody was going to see that anyway...Eleanor Roosevelt came that day and they did a full-scale white-glove inspection. We were all twelve confined to quarters for dust on the overhead. My popularity was really in trouble!"

They were allowed only one weekend liberty during training, but they saw as much of New York as they could in two days. "We were in a war bond parade down Fifth Avenue."

Next came Milledgeville, Georgia, for store keeper school at Georgia State College for Women. She scored the highest on the placement test for storekeeper third, and yet they gave the position to a man because he was married and had a family to support. That was the only time

Marrion recalled experiencing gender discrimination in the Navy. She accepted it because that was the way the world worked at that time. She got the next opening available.

She became a disbursing store keeper. No weapons training was given to the WAVES, and they were not expected to go overseas. Her father was more concerned about her taking up smoking than seeing combat.

Overall, she was treated very well in the Navy with good instructors and comfortable accommodations. She found people treated anyone in uniform with respect.

While she enjoyed her time in Georgia, she was challenged a bit by the accent, once having great trouble communicating a desire for caramels which she pronounced car-mels and they pronounced care-a-mels.

Another challenge was the racial discrimination of Jim Crow laws. "Separate restrooms, separate waiting rooms at train depots. They sat in the back. When I was in New Orleans . . . I got on a street car—it was the Canal Street car—and thought nothing of it and sat down. A woman came up to me and she said, Are you a Negro? I said, 'No, I am not, why?' I really didn't look like a Negro.

The woman told her she couldn't sit in seats behind a movable sign that divided the sections of the bus for whites and blacks. "I was quite shocked that anybody would ask me that. I didn't think it would matter anyway. I learned differently," Marrion said.

She learned that whites went out on the town on Friday nights and blacks went out on Saturday nights and there could be no overlap. She wasn't sure if that

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# Lois Selberg Went To Washington D.C.

**By: Maureen Kelly Jonason**

"Never learn to milk," Lois Cornell Selberg's mother Delia was taught growing up in rural Clay County. So she attended Moorhead Normal School instead and became a teacher. She taught at the consolidated school in Rustad, at the time a three-story building, for two years before marrying Clarence Cornell. They raised five daughters on a farm still standing 10 miles outside of Moorhead.

Lois grew up without phone, electricity, or running water: "We were as poor as everyone else," she noted matter-of-factly. The five girls weren't allowed to drive a tractor or do much of the harder farm work, but they could shock wheat.

At age 14, Lois attended Moorhead High School and so lived in town in a rooming house with one of her sisters.

Lois was just 16 on December 7, 1941 when the US suddenly found itself in the war. The shortages and rationing that followed "weren't terrible." Like many others, she remembers standing in line to buy nylons that turned out to be too small. The older boys went off to war and the girls went to college. Lois attended what was then called Moorhead State Teachers College.

Lois loved college. It was more wonderful than high school because it was fun to be in the



Lois Selberg spent the war years in Washington D.C.

company of faculty, to be among smart people with original ideas and new kinds of humor. College "was a whole new world" and very stimulating.

Right after high school, in 1943, Lois went off with two friends to Washington D.C. for the summer to work and explore. Her sister already lived there and

worked in a department store. Back then, to work in such a place women dressed up and wore hats. Lois went in dressed to the nines and still recalls a comment about being the "belle of the ball." She didn't get that job, but she was hired in the dead-letter office of *US News and World Report*. She wasn't looking for glamour or experience – just a summer job some place exciting. Still, she was happy to return home for classes in the fall.

The next summer, she went to Saint Cloud to work at Char-Gale Manufacturing. They made parts of C-47s which were then shipped to Seattle for finishing. Like many industries, the shifts ran 24 hours a day. She worked the night shift – 4:00 p.m. to midnight.

Rivet gun in hand, she was a true Rosie-the-Riveter. The company hired men to be in charge and women to carry out the work. She dressed in overalls with her hair up in a scarf, just like in the iconic image we all know. It was mindless work that she hated, but the pay was better than in Moorhead or Fargo. Having to do manual labor taught her a lot, and again, she was glad to head back to college at the end of summer.

During her first two years of college, Lois recalled soldiers on campus for a special program. They marched from class to class and lived in the dorms. The

program must have ended because she was able to live in the dorms her last two years of college.

The summer before her junior year, Lois went back to Washington, D.C. and this time she worked for the government. They needed a lot of people. Those who committed to six months had their travel expenses reimbursed. She worked that summer in the Navy Annex of the Pentagon doing filing and non-typing tasks. She couldn't type. There was no air conditioning, and she remembered the stifling heat.

She enjoyed urban life and how the city was filling up with people from all over the country. There was a lot to see and do. She and her friends enjoyed sightseeing to Mount Vernon as well as trying out lowly dives and elegant restaurants. They were adventurers!

News of the victory over Japan came while she was on her train trip home. She returned to a busy life on campus as editor of the *Mistic* college paper and the *Dragon* yearbook. She also ran for student senate but lost to Joyce Kohlman. "Women ran things," Lois recalled. The women she knew were smart, confident leaders. "We thought we could do everything!"

When the men came back, the women had to learn to live and

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 68**

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## Former Mayor Fought In Battle Of The Bulge

**By: Jacob Underlee**

The following story was taken from an interview with Ray Stordahl, as well as his written war recollections.

Richard "Ray" Stordahl was just 18 years old when he volunteered for the army and found himself fighting back against the German military surge

in the Battle of the Bulge.

Stordahl was born in McIntosh, MN, in 1926. He has been known as Ray for most of his life.

"In high school somebody started calling me Ray, and first thing you know..." he said. "It just kind of stuck. I've always been called Ray. Nobody would know who Richard is."

He graduated from high school in 1944 and headed straight for the army.

"I realized that I was going to get drafted so I might as well go," Stordahl explained. "So off I went to Fort Snelling, and basic training in Texas at Fort Hood."

Stordahl was told he would finish basic training and then attend intelligence and reconnaissance school. However, world events would change the direction of his military service.

"At the end of basic training the captain called us all out and said forget about anything else, we were all going to Europe, because the Battle of the Bulge had just started," Stordahl said. "So off we went. Within a couple weeks there I am, sitting in a foxhole in Belgium carrying a great big gun."

At the time he arrived in Europe, Stordahl only had seventeen weeks of basic training under his belt. He was assigned to the Eleventh Armored Division of Patton's Third Army and made a rifleman in the Fifty-Fifth

Armored Infantry Battalion. The group's mission was to hold back the Germans from Bastogne and Houffalize, Belgium.

Being a native of Minnesota meant Stordahl was accustomed to cold weather. Belgium wasn't quite as cold, but the snow and frigid temperatures made the situation difficult. This was especially true when Stordahl had to spend long periods of time in his foxhole.

He combated the cold by alternating between two pairs of wool socks his mother had knit for him back in Minnesota. By doing this he helped insulate his army boots, which weren't designed for the cold weather the battalion was facing.

"When I was sitting in my frozen foxhole I was thinking, boy, if I ever get out of this alive I'm never going back to where it gets cold again," Stordahl said with a laugh as he sat in the living room of his Moorhead home. "Yet here I am."

Eventually Stordahl and other units of the Third Army met up with the First Army in late January 1945 by Houffalize. The town had traded hands many times during the conflict. First the Americans controlled it in the fall, then lost it to the Germans.

Eventually American forces recaptured Houffalize at the end of the Battle of the Bulge.

Stordahl recalls the town being in complete disarray, with only rubble left. Despite lasting only two months, American combat losses were estimated at over 80,000 and German losses around 81,000.

The American forces had fought back the German advance, and now it was their turn to move forward. Stordahl's battalion headed towards the border of Germany, called the Siegfried

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 57**



Ray Stordahl graduated from Concordia College in 1950. He went on to become president of Silverline Boat Company and four-term mayor of Moorhead.



Ray Stordahl, of Moorhead, volunteered for the army after graduating from high school. Immediately after basic training he was sent to Belgium to fight in the Battle of the Bulge.

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# Former Publishers Recall WWII Memories

By: Jacob Underlee

Ken and Gerrie Anderson each served two years in the military before getting married and sharing a 40-year career as newspaper owners in Minnesota.

Gerrie was born in Grand Forks. Her father worked as a grain elevator manager, which caused her family to move frequently. Eventually they settled in Dwight, ND, a small town northwest of Wahpeton.

She graduated from high school in three years and enrolled at the University of North Dakota to pursue a career as a doctor. However, the courses were not what she expected.

"When I got my first chemistry report card I decided I didn't want to be a doctor anymore," she said.

Instead, Gerrie decided to pursue journalism. She graduated from UND in 1942.

Ken grew up helping out on the family farm in Grand Rapids, ND.

"It was a partnership with my dad," he explained. "I was there until I was about 21."

When World War II began Ken was initially exempt from service because of his farming responsibilities. However, he eventually decided to volunteer for duty.

"All my buddies were gone so I decided to enlist," he said.

Ken joined the Army Air Corps, now the Air Force, in 1943. He completed basic training in Amarillo, TX, then went on to flight training in Pasadena, CA.

As a recent college graduate, Gerrie was unsure of her next career step. She decided to join



Ken and Gerrie Anderson, formerly of Barnesville, each served two years in the military during WWII.

the WAVES, a newly formed all-woman division of the Navy.

The name of the group was an acronym for Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service. The group was created to address the special personnel needs of WWII.

"Everyone was thinking and talking war or going to help," she explained. "I thought it would be interesting to join the WAVES."

Gerrie moved to Washington

D.C. and worked in the Research & Development arm of the Bureau of Ordnance. Inventors visited the office and gave demonstrations of new aircraft ordinances that were about to be sent to the fleet.

"They'd show me how it worked and I'd write it up," Gerrie said. "That was my main thing there. I wrote little pamphlets."

Meanwhile, Ken was flying combat missions over Germany. He was stationed in Attlebridge Airfield, England, about 90 miles northeast of London.

"I made 11 missions in a B-24," Ken said. "I was a top turret gunner. That's the guy on the top of the plane."

Ken was one of ten crewmembers operating the aircraft, which was used in addition to the famed B-17 bomber during WWII.

Near the end of the war most enemy fighters had been neutralized, leaving the greatest danger on the ground.

"The missions were easier than they had been earlier in the war," Ken said. "We still got shot at, of course."

The Army Air Corpsmen had to contend with anti-aircraft weapons in enemy territory. The shells posed a threat if they detonated at the height the B-24 was flying. If the shells were about 500 feet higher or lower it wasn't a problem.

"A few times these guys put it

right at our level. That's when it was really tough," Ken said.

He recalled one mission over Germany where his bomber took heavy damage.

"Our right wing got a direct hit," he said.

The wing folded over and the plane began to descend. The crew managed to land safely, but endured heavy damage.

"We had over 50 shrapnel holes in that plane. The hydraulic system was shot out, but we made it back," Ken said.

The crew had to manually crank down the hydraulic system because of the damage from the anti-aircraft weaponry.

"That was the toughest mission," he said.

As top turret gunner, Ken had a unique view of the ground by looking down through the bomb bay doors. On one occasion his B-24 was flying a low mission at 5,000 feet above enemy marshalling yards.

While they were dropping bombs a locomotive rolled into view and was directly hit.

"I had a clear view of it," Ken said. "That locomotive must've gone as high as this house."

The 387th Bomb Group also made a few missions to Austria before the European campaign ended.

Ken was shipped back to the United States expecting to train on B-29s to prepare for the continuing fight in the Pacific Theater.

His plans were cut short by the Japanese surrender. He was discharged from the service as a staff sergeant after two years.

His parents had sold the farm and relocated to Valley City, ND, so Ken returned home and started classes at Valley City Teacher's College.

Gerrie completed her two years of military service with the WAVES. She attended military school and was promoted to first lieutenant. When the war ended she left the Navy and returned to North Dakota.

During college summers Gerrie had worked as a reporter for the local newspaper in Lidgerwood, ND. Her former boss now owned the Valley City Times Record newspaper, and invited her to join the staff.

"I did a little bit of everything. I

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 54**



Ken and Gerrie met in Valley City, ND. Ken was attending Valley City Teacher's College while Gerrie was working at the Valley City Times Record newspaper.

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## Fairmont Creamery Contributes To Efforts



The Fairmont Creamery was an important local part of the WWII effort. Photo is from the Army Navy E Award booklet.

**By: Maureen Kelly Jonason**

“Industrial War Plant Processes Vital Food for Victory!”

So touted the headline of the February 26, 1943 *Country Press*, a Moorhead weekly paper during WWII. It turns out that by the middle of the war, Moorhead’s own Fairmont Creamery was a major player in the war effort.

In January of 1942, as a result of the December 7, 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor, Fairmont Creamery began retrofitting to fulfill a

major government contract to mass processing powdered eggs. Production of dried eggs had tripled nationwide, producing 16 million pounds per year. A program of the Department of Agriculture, dried egg production had started in March of 1941 before the US even entered the war.

The perception that the Midwest was somehow unaffected by the war or that its people were “not as war-minded” was expressed in one local editorial. The real problem, however, was that the Midwest had not yet been

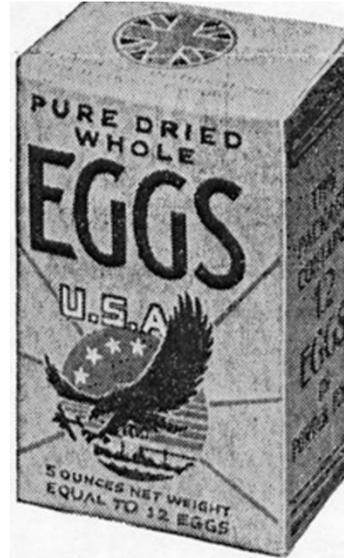
asked to serve the greater good, “If this immediate area is not doing more, it is because we have not been given the opportunity.” The government’s need for the Fairmont Creamery’s service finally drew “us” into the war effort.

Other endeavors in Moorhead were also notable. The Armory was converted into a draftee processing center while Minnesota State Teachers College was starting a radio technology program. Concordia College already had a civil aeronautics training program.

The World War II era brought a lot of changes for industry. Due in part to the mass exodus of men to serve in the military, women entered the workforce in noticeably larger numbers. Although not entirely complete, a survey of the Moorhead city directories documents, to some degree, this particular social change.

Back then, the directories listed everyone’s work place. In 1940, 116 people listed Fairmont Creamery as their employer, with just 19 of them women 16%. In 1945, 56.5% of the Creamery staff was made up of women. In 1948, we can conclude that Fairmont laid off most of the women hired when the number dropped to 26%.

One of the many women who sought employment at the Creamery was Adeline Larson. Interviewed by MSUM Archivist Dr. Terry Shoptaugh in 1999, Larson shared her experiences working in the dried egg division.

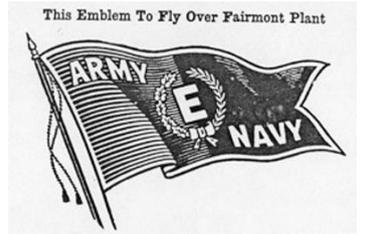


A dozen dried whole eggs are packed in this little box, 3 1/4 inches by 2 1/4 inches, for export, principally to England. Each package, after being tightly sealed, is dipped in wax to protect the contents from deterioration.

This ad was taken from the *Moorhead Country Press*.

Larson was a 1941 Moorhead High graduate who recalled hearing about the bombing of Pearl Harbor that night in church. “The announcement came right from the pulpit.” She worked briefly at the Diemert laundry until it closed in January of ‘42.

In March, she remembers that the Creamery was advertising jobs “and they needed a lot of girls.” About 75% of the workers in the egg-drying production area were women. Adeline had to acquire a Social Security number, which was a new thing then, for her application. She took her birth certificate to the Courthouse and



This was taken from the Moorhead Country Press.

discovered the Powers that Be had left off her middle name. Her mother had to pay extra to have it added to her Social Security card.

She was hired immediately and soon went to work. Moving from \$5 per week at the laundry to \$12 per week at the Creamery was definitely a step up. They withheld \$.12 for Social Security, and she took home \$11.88 for a 40-hour week.

Wearing white uniforms, hair nets, and white caps, about 30 women stood in a row on both sides of a long table. An automated rack came down with 12 dozen eggs, and the girls started cracking, two at a time, into buckets. They had to sniff the contents for rotten eggs and occasionally spoon out blood spots, keeping each batch fresh before the vats of eggs were moved up to the drying chamber. The Fairmont was set up to process 100 million eggs per year, producing about 14,000 pounds of powder per day.

Adeline recalls cleaning crews coming in every time they took a break to wash down the tables and floors so the egg-breaking operations stayed clean. Strict attention to efficiency was enforced with no talking to waste

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 17**

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# German POWs Held In Moorhead During WWII, Worked On Area Vegetable Farms

The following article was previously published in the Clay County Historical Society newsletter, March/April 1991, and is available online.

By: Mark Peihl

One relatively unknown story of the home front in World War II is that of the scores of German prisoners of war who worked on Clay County farms during the summers of 1944 and 1945.

Over 420,000 German, Italian and Japanese POWs were held by the United States during WW II. America probably treated POWs better than any other belligerent. It wasn't out of any particular kindness, but because the U.S. strictly followed the 1929 Geneva Convention. However, the interpretation of the accords were subject to revision as the U.S. learned to deal with the prisoners by trial and error.

The huge number of men in uniform created a severe labor shortage in the U.S., particularly in low priority industries such as agriculture.

To help out, the federal government offered to supply POWs on a contract basis to civilian employers. As long as they were not required to work on any project directly related to the war effort or in dangerous jobs, this was completely in line with the Geneva accords.

In the Spring of 1944, Moorhead area truck farmers Henry Peterson and Paul Horn contracted for 150 prisoners to work on their vegetable farms.

Army inspectors sent to locate suitable housing for the POWs initially selected a barn near the Red River on 12th Avenue South in Moorhead. Local residents objected to having POWs housed in their neighborhood so a second site, an onion warehouse on 21st Street near 4th Avenue North, was selected.

On Sunday, May 28, the first 40 Germans arrived in Moorhead from a large POW Camp at Algona, Iowa. They were accompanied by several guards and 2nd Lt. Richard M. Blair, commander of Algona Branch Camp Number One as the Moorhead facility was officially known. They spent the first night in tents on the Horn farm south of town, but soon began transforming the warehouse, which still stands, into a barracks. The remaining 110 or so arrived by train on May 31 and marched from the Northern



During the summers of 1944 and 1945, two groups of German POWs worked on the Henry Peterson and Paul Horn vegetable farms. The POWs were supplied on a contract basis to make up for the shortage of men who were overseas fighting in the war. *Florence Drury Collection.*

Pacific Railroad Depot to the camp.

The prisoners did all the work at the compound themselves including installing a water and sewer system. The government provided the materials. An eight-foot-high wire fence surrounded the 60 x 170 foot warehouse. A guard tower was planned but apparently never built.

Six days a week, trucks from the Peterson and Horn farms picked up the POWs and their guards and carried them to the fields. There the prisoners planted, hoed and eventually picked the vegetables or did general farm maintenance; always watched by guards.

They were paid, too. The contractors paid the government 40 cents an hour per prisoner for their labor, the going rate for farm labor as defined by the Clay County Wage Board.

In turn, the government paid the prisoners 10 cents per hour in coupons redeemable only at the camp canteen. The remaining 30 cents went toward housing and feeding the POWs and profit for the U.S. Government. Between June and September 1944 alone, local POW labor netted the U.S. well over \$13,000.

Most of the prisoners had been captured in Italy and Sicily, and a few in North Africa.

German speaking T. Sgt. Eric O. Brasch, second in command and contact man between Lt. Blair and the prisoners, told the Fargo Forum "They still think Germany will win the war. They are not permitted to see newspapers or listen to the radio, and we don't tell them anything, so what they know is what they knew when they left the battlefields or whatever rumors they may have heard."

Horn and Peterson, in a 1973

interview with the Northwest Minnesota Historical Center at Minnesota State University Moorhead, remembered most of the POWs as "...friendly...and quite nice people" though a little reluctant to work. Horn estimated that "Their output of work was, I suppose, about 65% compared to migrant labor from South Texas... They just couldn't keep up."

A few prisoners, particularly those captured in North Africa

before Germany's decline, caused some minor problems. Florence Drury of Moorhead, bookkeeper on the Peterson Farm in 1944, remembers three "real Nazi types. They would strut around with their chests out, like they were goose stepping almost."

A few prisoners broke a pump with a sledge hammer and there was a sit down strike in September that ended with 14 prisoners spending a night in the Clay County Jail, but that was unusual. There were no escapes.

Mrs. Drury remembers most of them as "just ordinary kids." Aside from their German uniform caps and the "P W" stamped on their blue shirts and pants, they looked no different from young Americans.

That there were few problems may be due to the humane treatment they received from Horn, Peterson and Lieutenant Blair.

After the war many prisoners wrote letters, now in the NWMHC Archives, thanking the Horns and Petersons for their kind treatment. Several requested aid packages or assistance in getting to America.

One remembered Peterson sending flowers and fruit to sick prisoners at Moorhead's St. Ansgar Hospital, two trips to a movie theater and "Bier and cigarettes" on Saturdays.

The latter were forbidden by Army regulations, as was a memorable trip mentioned by another prisoner to Moorhead's

**CONTINUED TO PAGE 34**

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## Why Local GI Was Made A French Knight

By: Markus Krueger

Last September Conrad Newgren received a letter from the French embassy. It informed him that he had been made a Knight of the Legion of Honor. This is France's highest award, the equivalent to our nation's Medal of Honor. The letter said, in part;

"My fellow countrymen will never forget your sacrifice. Their children and grandchildren are as proud of your courageous actions as can be your own children and grandchildren.

This outstanding distinction is the highest honor that France can bestow upon those who have achieved remarkable deeds for France. It is also a sign of true gratitude for your invaluable contribution to the liberation of France during these difficult times in the history of our nation."

What did he do to deserve such an award? Plenty. Since Conrad Newgren is a member of the Historical Society and a regular visitor to the Hjemkomst Center, he agreed to share his stories with his friends here at the museum.

Conrad Newgren grew up in The Point, an old Moorhead neighborhood that is now the park surrounding the Hjemkomst Center. He was drafted as a combat engineer in 1943, just after his 18th birthday. As a combat engineer, Conrad was taught how to string barbed wire, how to strengthen defensive lines, how to locate and diffuse land mines, how to blow things up, how to shoot straight, and how to build a bridge across a river while people are shooting at you. Although the story of the combat engineers are not often told, the engineers were crucial to the success of the American armed forces in World War II.

He landed in Italy 40 miles south of Rome at Anzio Beach, a replacement for fallen members



Conrad Newgren in Chicago after returning to the United States in 1946.

of the 10th Engineer Combat Battalion, Third Infantry Division. The unit certainly needed replacements. Divisions are supposed to have between 10,000 and 15,000 men. In four months of being bogged down on the small beachhead at Anzio, the Third Infantry Division suffered 6,295 men killed, wounded and missing.

The Americans were easy targets for the Germans shooting down on them from the high ground. "They shelled every inch of that beachhead," Conrad explains. "We hung on by our

finger nails." He does not have fond memories of Anzio, but Newgren proudly boasts that the combat engineers of the Third Division strung enough barbed wire along the beaches of Anzio to go around the earth.

It was on Anzio Beach that Conrad met Audie Murphy, the most decorated soldier in American history. "He was a corporal then. I was 18, he was 19." Conrad's engineer battalion was often attached to a unit that Murphy commanded.

Like Conrad Newgren, Audie Murphy's heroism under fire earned him membership in France's Legion of Honor, not to mention the United States' Medal of Honor and about 30 other military awards.

Now Audie Murphy is perhaps best remembered as an actor, singer, and author. His greatest role was when he played himself in *To Hell and Back*, the movie version of his war memoirs. "I always said he was fearless, reckless, and luckier than hell," Conrad says of Murphy.

German bullets were not the only deadly objects flying through the air on Anzio Beach. The mosquitoes carried malaria. Conrad was bit by one of these mosquitoes at Anzio and contracted the disease. Symptoms

include vomiting, headaches, fever and chills.

"You're freezing to death but you have a fever of 105!" he explains. "You were so damn sick you wanted to die," Newgren recalls.

The doctors put him in a bed of ice to keep his temperature down. Quinine, the most common treatment for malaria, made him blind. Another pill treatment turned him yellow. Conrad suffered relapses of malaria seven times in Italy and each relapse put him in the hospital for a week.

"The only good thing about getting that damn malaria," he says, "is it kept me out of a few good battles."

Conrad's engineer battalion prepared the way for the Americans to finally break out of the Anzio beachhead. Before the assault, he and the engineers were ordered to sneak out between the lines after dark to make paths through the minefields for the soldiers to rush through. They marked the paths with white tape as German machinegun fire blindly swept the field from time to time.

"They just wanted us to know they were there," he explains.

One of his worst memories of the war is of a young soldier who got lost in the dark and found himself on the wrong side of the white tape. Conrad did not know how badly he was wounded or if he survived, but memories of the young soldier weeping and calling for his mother still affect him these 67 years later. The offensive succeeded and the Americans were on their way to Rome.

Near Monte Cassino, he came upon a soldier whose arm was only attached to his body by a thread of muscle. Since there were no medics around, Newgren applied a tourniquet and cut off the arm. "Now maybe I can get out of this goddamn army," said his patient.

They took Rome on June 4, 1944. It was the first Axis capitulation to fall to the Allies. Conrad likes to say that he spent his 19th birthday in Rome but he had to shoot his way in. The monumental news, however, was almost immediately overshadowed. Two days later was D-Day, the Allied invasion of Normandy.

"We didn't even get an honorable mention," Conrad said.

His unit spent two or three weeks garrisoning Rome, basically acting as the police. Even this assignment away from the front line was not without danger. The Germans left snipers behind in the city to harass the Americans. In one of Rome's famous fountains Conrad threw a coin. "My wish was when this war was over, I'd

still be alive."

In August of 1944, Conrad Newgren participated in Operation Dragoon, the second and less famous Allied invasion of France. At that time, the German Army was taking slow horrific casualties trying to slow the Russian advance in Poland. They were struggling to keep the American and British troops bottled up in the hedgerows of Normandy, and they were holding their own in the rugged mountains of northern Italy.

Conrad Newgren and 151,000 other American and Free French troops landing on the Mediterranean coast of France was more than Hitler could handle. Newgren remembers little German resistance when he landed at San Tropez, and the Allies moved quickly across the French Riviera. The closer the Germans got to their Fatherland, however, the stiffer their German resistance became.

The Allied advance was slowed in France's Vosges Mountains. These mountains were the last great defensible positions before the Rhine River. On the other side of the Rhine was Germany. The Nazis' backs were to the wall, and they fought accordingly.

In addition to the rugged terrain, the GIs had to fight their way through the Maginot Line (pronounced MAZH-i-no). The French built this line of modern fortress complexes after the First World War to be a wall that would stop any German invasion in its tracks.

Unfortunately for the French, the Germans simply went around it when they invaded in 1940. Although the line was built to stop a German invasion, the Nazis had four years to turn the Maginot Line's defenses around and use them to protect Germany.

The main body of the Third Infantry bypassed the Maginot

CONTINUED ON PAGE 46



Conrad Newgren in France, 1944. Sixty-six years after this picture was taken he was awarded the country's highest award.

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# "Doing Your Part" Was Goal During WWII

**By: Dr. Terry Shoptaugh**

"War," wrote British author Cyril Connolly in 1940, "is a tin can tied to the tail of civilization."

It wasn't just soldiers who had their normal lives changed by war. Civil Defense arrangements were designed to encourage each American, man and woman, young and old to "do your part" to bring victory.

"It will not be enough for each American to be told, individually, that the government wants him to buy so many bonds or grow so many pigs or so many acres of wheat or corn," anthropologist Margaret Mead wrote on civil defense. Americans must feel the war's necessities and know that they were part of it.

It was from this sense then that Moorhead and Fargo held



Manny Marget KVOX Radio personality, did broadcasting in Clay County during WWII.

an air raid drill. KVOX radio in Moorhead covered the blackout in a live broadcast by Manny Marget, the station's manager. Marget was supposed to have gone out on the street for this, but when he arrived at the studio, he found out that the extension cord he needed for his microphone was locked in a cabinet and he didn't have the key.

No problem, because Marget had spent years broadcasting the F-M Twins baseball games in which he frequently elaborated on the action with his own imagination.

So for the blackout, he simply went into the studio and made it all up, telling listeners how one street after another went black until he dramatically concluded with "And now darkness has come over all of Fargo and Moorhead".

By mid-1942, Clay County had 112 air spotters. Each one of them was given copies of the Minnesota newsletter of the American Legion pointing out that the polar air route from Norway to Duluth was shorter than from Norway to New

York. Even though this was still a far greater distance than the range of any German airplane, the local newspapers published drawings of Allies planes and urged readers to study them.

Men and women signed up for a number of wartime civilian services. Werner Brand, a graduate of Concordia College, was 32 years old and working in Seattle when the war began. He acted as an air raid warden on the west coast and then returned to Minnesota where he was rejected by the draft because of his age and near-sightedness. So he joined the Moorhead company of the Home Guard that was organized after the National Guard unit was Federalized: "I didn't like the idea of Army life and so on, but I did join because I thought it was my duty to do something on the home front," Brand said.

Others joined the Victory Speakers, a group resurrected from the First World War, where men and women spoke at gatherings to remind their neighbors that "no price has ever been too great to pay for free institutions."

In the same spirit 50 year-old local businessman William Robbins wrote to Governor Harold Stassen, asking for some type of war-related work for him and his son, who was deaf. We are "ready and are anxiously willing to go anywhere any place to help," he pleaded. "Let me go and help, Mr. Governor, we want to do our bit."

Minnesota created its Victory Aide program to satisfy the desires of Robbins and hundreds of others. Established on December 10, 1941, Victory Aide members were older men and women who worked in a variety of war-related activities -- assisting with scrap drives, Red Cross and bond drives, maintaining contact with the families of men and women in the service, and keeping one's community aware of defense activities in general.

Most important, the individual Victory Aide was to act as a symbol of local defense. One of the organizers of the program explained to Clay's Victory Aide Director that "the simple things we are doing now may be the important points in maintaining high civilian morale and preserving our democratic way of living."

Clay's Director of Victory Aide activities was Marjorie Thompson of Baker Township. As president of the Baker-Sabin Republican Women's Club, Thompson had turned out the voters for Stassen in 1940. Now she devoted her

energies to recruiting a Victory Aide for each block in each town in Clay and two aides for each rural township. Thompson was tireless and forceful in her enthusiasm,



Marjorie Thompson was the Director of Victory Aide in Clay County during WWII.

and she enrolled over two hundred Aides in a matter of weeks. She organized the program so well that for the rest of the war she had her "finger on the pulse of all other war activities in Clay County."

For the next three years, Victory Aides assisted in first-aid training, made doughnuts and coffee that were passed out on passing troop trains, button-holed citizens into signing pledges against hoarding, collected clothes for overseas donations, and taught classes on nutrition -- "how to stretch a half pound of meat into three meals." Short of a major blizzard, nothing slowed down "Thompson's army."

Here could be discerned a change in the times. Had representatives of a New Deal agency gone door to door in this manner in the 1930s, conservatives would have screamed to the high heaven about "big government" intimidating the individual. But this was wartime, and the Aides, who were neighbors after all, were applauded for their zeal.

But all this was the exciting, "fun" part of defense activity. There were other sides—frustrating, infinitely sadder sides. Most of all there was the loneliness of war, that empty feeling that weighed heaviest on the GI who was overseas, away from all he knew and loved, and those who kept the GI closest to their hearts. For Carol Raff, the war was a trial of loneliness, first, last and always.

Carol was a bright child raised in Fertile, who was taught to read by her mother when she was not yet three years-old.

She was smart enough to skip first grade, advanced rapidly in school, and was just 15 when she began classes at Moorhead State

Teachers College. With a bright smile, sparkling eyes and vivid blonde hair that she wore pinned up in a braid that made her look like the quintessential farmer's daughter, Carol made friends easily.

By 1939 she was in her senior year at the college, active in numerous organizations, and editor of the college paper, the *Mistic*. She was also a member of the Pilgrim Fellowship, a young people's group at the Moorhead Congregational Church.

There, she later remembered, she was strongly influenced by the beliefs of the church's minister, Reverend Charles Brewster, who was very much a pacifist:

"Our fellowship aim was not to get into war and it was a moral issue as far as we were concerned," said Carol Raff in an interview.

While attending chapel at the college, Carol would look up above the auditorium stage at the three stained-glass windows fashioned in 1923 as a memorial to the students who had died in the Great War. She felt that somehow, if the nation became involved in Hitler's war, it would be letting down those who had died in the trenches in 1918. "Patriotism and nationalism are desirable when they result from wide-awake thinking and are not mere rote declarations," she wrote in a September 15, 1939 editorial in the college newspaper, the *Mistic*. "Our slogan must be: 'We will not fight in Europe.'"

Carol and most of her staff opposed American entry in "Hitler's war" until she graduated in 1940. She got a job as a high

school teacher in nearby Detroit Lakes. She continued to follow international events, hoping that somehow the United States would steer clear of the bloody struggle. But then on Sunday afternoon, December 7, 1941, she was visiting Jennie Owens of the Moorhead campus and heard the news of Pearl Harbor being attacked. She knew that her hopes for America staying out of the war had been in vain. She was just 20 years old.

She continued teaching in Detroit Lakes until her fiancé, Frederick Coughlin of Detroit Lakes, received his draft notice late in 1942. Then like thousands of other couples, they got married, four days before he reported for duty. She remained in Detroit Lakes while he took his basic training and received his assignment to an Army Air Forces stateside post.

"Many of my high school boys were going into the service also, and with that I was very emotionally involved," she recalled.

Then in 1943, Carol became pregnant and gave up her teaching. After her son, Douglas, was born, "we followed Fred and the military around." When he was stationed in Ephrata, Washington, they lived in a tiny cabin of an old tourist camp; the conditions were "just terrible," with no relief from the area's arid and raw conditions.

The next posting was in Oklahoma and it was better, but Fred was learning to be part of a bomber crew and that left little time

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## Beverly Coleman Doing Important Work

**By: Maureen Kelly Jonason**

Longtime Moorhead resident Beverly Coleman was a freshman at MSU when the US entered WWII. "That was a shock, a big shock. They didn't expect to really get into the war," she recalled. By the time she was a senior, most of the male faculty were off to war, and she did not appreciate the substitutes.

First came a letter recruiting her to work in Washington, D.C., but she didn't think she wanted to do office work. She had been working some at the Fairmont Creamery, but she felt most of those jobs were "men's work."

She had started with egg cracking but was then asked to work in the dairy which required harder labor, and she did not think she was getting the same pay as the men. Then a man from Washington came to town to interview people, and she decided it was time for a change.

Although she went out to D.C. alone on the train, she often ran into locals she knew. She lived in a dormitory with single rooms and a shared bathroom. Because her parents could not spare the one alarm clock they owned, she depended on the woman across the hall to wake her each morning.

Beverly worked near Arlington Cemetery in a secure department that broke Japanese code. The men did the decoding, and the women typed up the analysis. She had to show her picture ID every time she went through the door:

"That was something. The Japanese did not know, ever, that we had discovered their code," she recalled.

She worked hard and watched films about the war to stay motivated. The hardest part was living next to Arlington Cemetery and listening every day, at all hours, to "Taps" being played for the many burials.

Once, she had a chance to go see Eleanor Roosevelt speak, so she ventured out at night without company, and she did just fine. She admired Eleanor and liked FDR as a president: "It's interesting to read about him now, and his polio and he didn't want to ever be photographed like that but he did all those fireside talks and kept the whole country thinking 'this is OK.'"

Compared to today's daily gloom-and-doom reports about the government, she felt Roosevelt kept the country feeling safe.

She loved living in the big city. While her mother worried and sent her every article she read about murders in D.C., Beverly enjoyed the excitement. There was



Beverly McDonald Coleman worked on Japanese decoding of messages during the war.

so much to see and do. She had wanted to stay there after the war, but it was time to go home and get married.

When the war was finally over, she said it was just like in the photos; everyone went outside and hugged each other.

Her intended, Albert Berdet Coleman, came home from the war before she did. He was at the

depot to meet her train. They were married in January of 1946. She continued to work various jobs because "I liked to work!"

Beverly reflects fondly on her time in Washington, D.C. Like so many Americans serving in the war effort, she found her contribution gratifying: "We thought we were important!"

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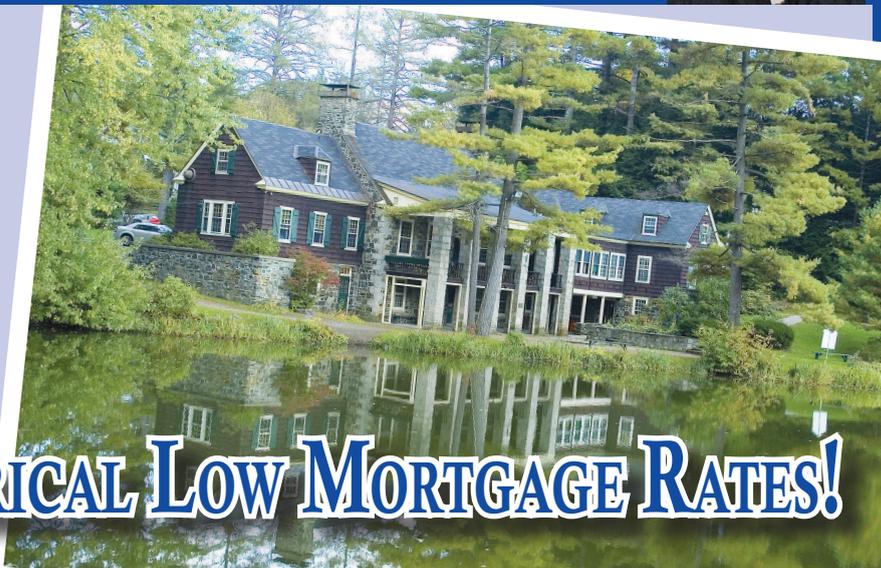
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# WWII Vet Recalls Time In Pacific Theater

By: Jacob Underlee

Arthur Peterson was a 27-year-old newlywed when he was drafted into World War II and left Barnesville to fight for his country in the Pacific theater.

Arthur "Art" Peterson was born on the family farm two-and-a-half miles east of Lawndale in Prairie View Township, Wilkin County, in 1914. He was the only boy in a family of five girls, and helped out with farm work from a young age.

His father raised dairy cows, chickens, hogs and a variety of crops without the help of tractors.

Peterson embraced technology from a young age and unsuccessfully tried to convince his father to switch from horsepower to tractors.

His love of mechanics lasted throughout his life and served him well in his time as an Army combat engineer.

Peterson moved to Barnesville to work at an auto garage in 1939. Despite the conflict in Europe he felt he had time to settle down. He got married on May 25, 1941, and bought a house soon afterward.

Months after he and his wife Marian wed, war was declared. Peterson was drafted on March 24, 1942. He was designated a combat engineer after basic training and was sent to Hawaii to pack equipment pallets for the infantry. At the time there were too many men with not enough equipment to go around.

"That was fine with me," said



Arthur "Art" Peterson served in the 110th Combat Engineer Unit in the Pacific Theater during WWII on the Leyte and Okinawa islands.

Peterson. "I wasn't anxious to get into anything rough."

The war was raging in the Pacific Islands when the military decided to capture a small atoll for use as a weather station. Peterson shipped out but was rerouted when a different island was chosen to serve as the station. Instead, the soldiers sailed for the Philippine island of Leyte.

"That was a rough one," Peterson said. "There was trouble there."

When the ships reached the island 42 days later, Peterson was required to stay aboard and help unload every pallet and truck onto a landing craft.

When evening came half of the 1,300 ships in the Gulf of Leyte, including Peterson's, were ordered out to the ocean for safety. From there he could view the sea battles taking place just over the horizon.

"I couldn't see the flashing of the guns but I could see the glare above it," Peterson remembered. "The red up in the clouds reflected that."

While at sea a kamikaze fighter spotted the ship Peterson was on. The Japanese plane descended from the fog before the gunners could react, but the pilot missed. When Peterson came up on deck he saw one wing of the plane lying on the deck. The aircraft had caught the cables and booms of the ship but had overshot its target by 10 feet too high and too far forward.

"If it had been that much further down or further back it would've hit and I wouldn't have been here," Peterson said. "I was good and glad to get off that ship."

The next day Peterson jump-started the last truck with a small boat battery and landed on Leyte Island. The soldiers already on land assumed he'd been sleeping while onboard and kept him working until he'd been awake for three days and two nights.

"I can tell you I was pretty well-shot by that time," Peterson said.

He fell asleep beneath a chugging air compressor for just one hour, yet woke feeling more refreshed than ever.

The time on Leyte was fraught with the danger of bombing attacks by Japanese planes. One night Peterson was repairing machinery about 200 feet from another engineer crew when a bomb was dropped onto a truck loaded with gasoline tanks.

He ducked for cover, felt the heat from the explosion and was pushed to the ground. The fire burned all night and the next morning there was a crater 25 feet deep. A total of 104 men were lost.

"That was a nasty night," Peterson said. "I don't forget that one."

After Leyte was secured Peterson and the rest of the 110th Combat Engineer Unit moved on to Okinawa, Japan, the last major

CONTINUED TO PAGE 61

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## Fairmont Creamery Contributes To Efforts



Fairmont employees Jack Shipp, left; and Alma Skalstad, third from left; accepting the E Award banner from Navy Commander Geo. F. Jacobs and Plant Superintendent J. H. Deems, right. Photo is from the Army Navy E Award booklet.

**CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11**  
time. The women stood from 6:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. with 30 minutes off for lunch. Adeline remembers the wet floor through the holes she wore in her soles.

Other women candled eggs and stripped turkeys. Later, Adeline did "piece work" earning almost \$19 per week. Since a male friend she knew worked at a bank for \$22 per week, she felt pretty good about the wage.

Adeline worked there nearly a year and a half, quitting when she married, just about the time the rationing started. She left not because she had gotten married, as had been the custom in the past, but because the early shift conflicted with her husband's work schedule. The decent wages had been a good motivator, and she later regretted giving up the job. However, her husband made about \$40 per week as a mechanic and parts man, and

since they weren't particular, they didn't feel the rationing any more than anyone else did. A shortage of shoes, automobiles, even tires, was nationwide.

"After breaking eggs all that time I didn't like eggs very well," Adeline recalls. "Even to this day . . . give me pancakes and skip the eggs."

Adeline remembers that other classmates went on to attend MSU to become teachers. Beth Hoperman - now Beth Dille—was among them. Other women went out to Washington D.C. to do clerical work for the government. Lois Cornell Selberg was one. And Adeline knew about the Clay County prisoner-of-war camp nearby. (See articles elsewhere in this publication.) A friend of her husband, Guy Christiansen, barbered for the prisoners.

Something particularly interesting about researching these old war era newspapers is noting the shift in tone. By February 1943, almost a cheerleading quality pervaded some writers. "Doesn't it just thrill you to know that here in your own community you have a plant, fitted out with the best and most modern equipment, operated by specialists in their assigned departments which is turning out daily over a million dried eggs—thousand and thousands of pounds of butter for the war effort," gushed reporter Lelia Hall.

She goes on to call upon "Mr. and Mrs. Farmer" to imagine with pride how their own sons might well be enjoying Minnesota dairy products halfway across the world.

"They say with appreciation over at the Fairmont Creamery, that they have over 5,000 patriotic Red River Valley Farmers"

contributing their products to the Creamery, and "attractive girls in spotless white uniforms, print and wrap the butter as it comes down the conveyor. Two hundred of the four hundred employees are girls," stated the *Country Press* reporter.

This particular writer also quipped, "It would never do to have a shift of boys cracking eggs. Can you imagine the mess if they got into an argument." It's hard to imagine this personal tone as part of a news report today!

But the cheerleading may have done some good because in December of 1943, Fairmont Creamery received word that they were receiving an Army-Navy "E" Award "for outstanding production of war material." For the 24-hours-a-day operation, of which 77% of the products were sold to the government and shipped to foreign countries, the company was congratulated for "making an outstanding contribution to victory," for being "an example to all Americans."

On December 17, the Creamery administration and employee reps received the award from government personnel at lunch. At 2:30 the "E" Banner was flown over the facility, and that night the employees were treated to a party and dance, and each received the "E" pin to wear proudly.

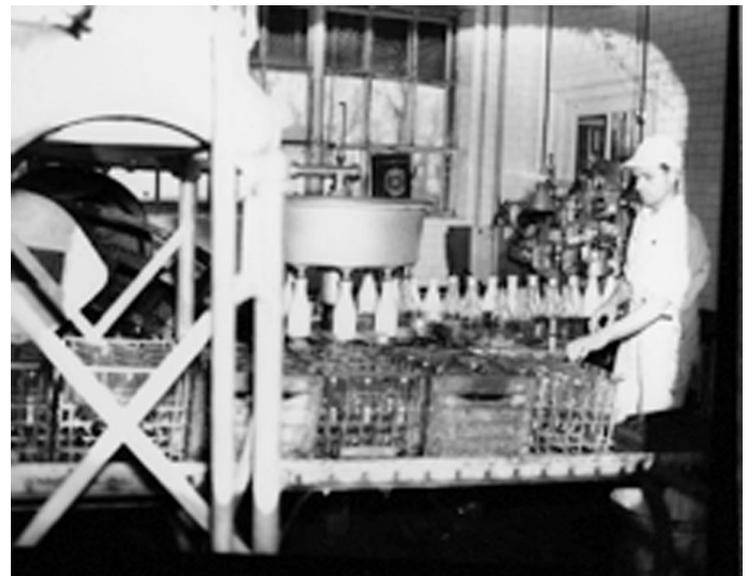
The history of the Fairmont

Creamery goes back to 1884 in Fairmont, Nebraska where the first plant was established, eventually to serve a 35-state region. The Moorhead plant opened in 1923 with four employees, peaking during the war years with nearly 400.

But in 1944, when it could have been celebrating its 60th anniversary, the employees were too busy producing food for the war movement. Besides the production of cheese and ice cream and both fresh and dried eggs and milk, the Creamery also operated a

large hatchery, feed mill, and food locker as well as providing dairy and poultry supplies.

Not only a boon for the Moorhead wartime economy, Fairmont Creamery was a great source of pride, lauded for its "high quality and quantity of production in line with the facilities available; cooperation between management and labor; avoidance of work stoppages; efficient management and low absenteeism." It clearly represented the best that America—and the Midwest in particular—had to offer.



Fairmont Creamery expanded their plant during WWII to make powdered eggs for the US Army. It operated 24 hours a day during the war and employed many local women as workers.



This ad was taken from the Moorhead Country Press.

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# From Minnesota To Munich In World War II

**By: Jacob Underlee**

Eddie Forsberg has spent his entire life on the farm his grandparents homesteaded, except for the 18 months he served overseas as a soldier in Germany during WWII.

"It was a good life," Forsberg said of growing up in a crowded house with his mother, his grandparents, an aunt and an uncle near Rollag.

Forsberg spent his childhood surrounded by Norwegian culture. His grandparents spoke fluent Norse around the house and sermons at Rollag Church were given in the language. Forsberg was soon bilingual, and picked up enough of the language to recognize similarities in words and phrases years later in Germany.

After attending a small country school until eighth grade, he transferred and graduated from Barnesville High School in 1942. Forsberg always planned on farming, and immediately took over the family operation after school until he was drafted in 1945.

Forsberg's original destination after basic training was Japan. However, the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki sent him to Munich, Germany.

In Munich, Forsberg worked as part of the motor pool, operating Jeeps, command reconnaissance

vehicles, heavy-duty trucks and a German civilian vehicle every now and then. His job was to transport officers and materials from place to place.

"It depended on what was needed," Forsberg said. "A lot of times you'd get a request from an officer that needed to get from point A to point B. You'd sit there awhile and then bring him back again- that sort of thing."

Forsberg also worked at Army post exchange stores, often referred to simply as PX. These shops served as general stores for American soldiers to buy cigarettes, soap, candy or other personal products. Forsberg stocked the PX stores by moving products in from the depot.

The soldiers often worked side-by-side with German civilians. Forsberg felt the American military presence was mostly appreciated, but perhaps more by the older generation than the younger.

Forsberg met and befriended soldiers from across the country during his military service. Despite the differences in culture, the men were on the same level as soldiers.

"We were quite the mix of people," Forsberg said. "But we got along fine."

Forsberg spent Christmas Eve of 1945 as he did any other day of the year- transporting a person from point A to point B. In this

case it was a German ski instructor who was to be brought home from an American ski camp to spend the holidays with his family.

Using his motor pool connections, Forsberg and a fellow soldier found a Jeep and delivered the ski instructor home, where they were surprised to meet his American wife and two young daughters.

The family invited them to stay the night and even treated them to a Christmas Eve supper. Later that night the two girls, in matching red dresses, sang "Silent Night" in German.

"I'll never forget it," Forsberg said. "It was just so beautiful."

Forsberg appreciated the home-cooked meal even more when he had sauerkraut the next day back at an Army mess hall.

"It was not something I was used to for Christmas Day dinner," Forsberg said with a laugh.

After relocating to Berlin, Forsberg's role transitioned from driver to rider. He now accompanied German civilians as they worked to rebuild the heavily damaged city.

The difference between regions of the country made a strong impression on Forsberg, who had previously marveled at the mountainous region of Bavaria in southern Germany.

"It was complete desolation," Forsberg said of Berlin. "There



Lifetime Rollag resident Eddie Forsberg served in the United States Army during WWII in Berlin and Munich, Germany.

was nothing but rubble on both sides of the street."

Forsberg left Germany in 1946, but still wonders how much the city he knew 64 years ago has changed.

"It would be fun to go back there and take a look," he said.

When Forsberg returned to America in 1946 he continued farming and married his wife Corrine in 1953. They raised two children, Gary and Lori, and were together for 54 years until her death in 2007.

Forsberg continued farming until he became a parts dealer at Rollag Implement in 1973.

"In the back of my mind I had always thought that if I did something other than farming, the thought of handling parts in an implement place sounded kind of fascinating," Forsberg explained.

He expected to only stay for the summer, but ended up working there for over two decades.

Forsberg hasn't yet returned to Berlin, but he and his son Gary did take part in the 2007 Honor Flight program that brought veterans to the new WWII Memorial in Washington, D.C. At first he was hesitant to visit, but his son convinced him.

"I thought, 'If you're interested I probably better be, too,'" said

Forsberg. "Now I'm very glad we did take that trip because it was just wonderful."

Today Forsberg lives on the same land he has since his childhood. He currently rents out the 160 acres of land that his son will eventually buy.

Forsberg enjoys gardening in his free time. He raises potatoes, onions, beets, lettuce, beans, tomatoes and squash.

"I've always done a little gardening," Forsberg explained. "Ever since I was old enough to help. I give most of it away, to whoever can use it."

Forsberg also maintains four bird feeders on his farm, which attract all manner of feathered friends to his home.

"They eat like crazy," Forsberg said of the blue jays, chickadees, finches, nuthatches and more that regularly swarm the feeders.

He also remains in touch with his family. Gary lives nearby and has worked as an Ottertail County conservation officer for more than 20 years. Lori continues to work at Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Dakota. Forsberg also has two grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

Forsberg feels that his military

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## War Meant Sacrifices On The Home Front

*This story is an excerpt from Dr. Terry Shoptaugh's book *Fighting For Their Lives*. The book tells the story of the World War II home front in Clay County, based on interviews with men and women who lived through that period, state and local records, and newspaper stories. If you are interested in obtaining a CD copy of this book, contact Mark Peihl at 218 299-5511, Ext. 6734 or mark.peihl@ci.moorhead.mn.us.*

**By: Dr. Terry Shoptaugh**

When Pearl Harbor propelled the United States into World War II, the nation was just beginning to recover from the Great Depression of the 1930s. The need to build ships and aircraft and armies for winning the war would accelerate that recovery, and war industry would bring full employment to every part of the country, laying the ground for a remarkable quarter century of economic growth.

But all of this was no more obvious in 1942 than the final outcome of the war. In 1942, the need to devote most of the country's resources to war production meant that smaller businesses would have to suffer shortages and difficulties.

Nearly half of all American industrial production was eventually given over to war needs, while 95 cents of every Federal tax dollar was spent on war expenses. In order to give priority for strategic materials like steel, copper, aluminum, and lumber, to large corporations that built the heavy armament, the U. S. government created a host of new Federal agencies to regulate the flow of raw materials, as well as the use of labor and prices.

Three of the most important of these agencies were the War Production Board (WPB), which attempted to coordinate the flow of vital raw materials and goods; the War Manpower Commission (WMC), which tried to do the same thing with people and jobs; and the Office of Price Administration (OPA), which tried to regulate prices and hold inflation to acceptable levels. Every citizen would find their lives changed by the power of these three super-regulators.

This federally managed effort succeeded in terms of winning the war. But this came at a price on the home front. With most of the nation's production devoted to defense, consumer goods were reduced, and thousands of smaller businesses suffered as a result. Hundreds of small plants that had made everything from alarm clocks to plumbing parts to furniture went out of business



Kiefer Chevrolet in Moorhead, 1950s. Jake Kiefer's business survived war-time challenges and remained a Moorhead institution into the 1970s. WDAY Telops Collection

between 1942 and 1944. Small stores that sold consumer goods failed when they could not supply their customers. This problem plagued Clay County business owners as much as anywhere else.

In mid-1942, the *Moorhead Daily News* surveyed the plight of small businesses in town. The survey concluded that "appliance dealers, hardware men, and others felt the pinch when the clamp was applied on production by the government." Local grocers ended the tradition of home deliveries, partly to save on gas and partly because the usual delivery boys left for military service. Furniture storeowners in town announced that their stocks of pre-war furniture were almost depleted.

They were purchasing the best new furniture available, in which "old wood and rope contraptions of years ago" replaced modern steel springs.

Similar problems afflicted practically every business in the county, and Milt Reirsgard, the editor of the *Ulen Union* was moved to complain, in his April 16, 1942 edition, "It has been the middle class in American life which has made this country what it is and preserved its free institutions. Little business has constantly been hobbled in one way or another, and the average man has been called on to pay a proportionately larger share of the taxes of the nation".

Some businesses tried to survive

with cosmetic adjustments. A hairdresser in Fargo, for example, changed her shop's name to the "Victory Beauty Shop," and ran ads stressing that a "Navy mother" ran it.

Federal rationing of beef made Warren Gutaw, proprietor of the Key City Cafe since the 1920s, compensate for his reduced meat supply by adding more chicken and fish dishes to the menu. The adjustment worked, he later said, since "People ate downtown more often during the war, because they didn't have as much food at home." Some smaller Moorhead diners, on the other hand, closed because limited menus diminished already slim profits.

Local automobile dealers had to make substantial adjustments when the sale of new cars was frozen and the government

requisitioned almost all the 1942 models for "wartime use." Jacob Kiefer, who had nursed his Chevy dealership in Moorhead through the worst of the Depression, had seen business pick up again in the late 1930s, and had only a few new cars and trucks on his lot when the freeze was ordered. Thereafter, he could not sell new vehicles without permission from the Office of Defense Transportation branch in Fargo.

It was a galling restriction. Farmers in the county would gladly have bought his trucks. Kiefer kept going by doggedly chasing down and buying used cars from those who were going into the service.

"We'd go out and ring doorbells, nights, and follow up on leads . . . Some nights we'd buy from 8:00 P.M. until 3:00 in the morning, we'd buy maybe four or five automobiles on good days from various families," Kiefer said. Men going into the service "for the duration" were his most reliable sources for vehicles.

A local machine shop brought in some money by offering training classes for defense industry jobs. Photographers prospered for a time as boys going overseas came in for last photos to give their families. One local fur and tanner business enjoyed brief booms in the 1943 and 1944 winters when rationed heating oil led to a jump in fur coat sales.

One of the more unusual wartime windfalls accrued to Moorhead's city government. Fargo Iron and Metal, the largest scrap dealer in the region, offered

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### Historical & Cultural Society Of Clay County WWII: A Salute To The Greatest Generation

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# Betts Henry Of The British Royal Air Force

By: Markus Krueger

Thousands of men and women in our community served in the armed forces during the second World War. Interestingly, not all of them served in the American armed forces.

Betts (Humphries) Henry was a Liverpool-born member of the British Royal Air Force who married a Clay County GI during the war. Her story has come to light thanks to Jessica Henry, Betts' granddaughter, who filmed an interview with Betts Henry in 1997 and allowed Historical and Cultural Society to place a copy in the Clay County archives.

For the United States, the war began with the bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. But for millions of people in Europe, including 17-year-old Esther "Betts" Humphries of Liverpool, the war started two years earlier. On September 1, 1939, Hitler's army invaded Poland. Great Britain and France declared war on Germany two days later. This was the real beginning of the largest and most costly war in human history.

Poland quickly fell to the German Blitzkrieg, or "lightning war," but many in England and

France were confident that they would defeat Germany just as they did in the Great War of 1914-1918.

When the Germans unleashed their forces on France, however, the unthinkable happened. In only six weeks the mighty French army was broken and British forces were just barely able to escape back across the English Channel. As British Prime Minister Winston Churchill said, "The Battle of France is over; I expect the Battle of Britain is about to begin."

The Battle of Britain was a battle fought in the sky between the British Royal Air Force and the German air force, the Luftwaffe. Betts Humphries was a member of Britain's defensive line in this battle. She joined the Women's Army Air Force (WAAFs), an outfit for women that worked in civil defense and as ground crew as part of the Royal Air Force.

After a month of taking heavy losses trying to destroy the RAF's fighters in daylight attacks to prepare the way for a Nazi invasion of England, the Germans changed tactics. Their bombers would make nighttime attacks on cities in an attempt to blast the people of England into surrendering. At one stretch, London was bombed

every night but one for 68 days straight. The British called it "The Blitz."

Betts likely witnessed one of the earliest German raids of the Blitz. On August 28-31, 1940, 160 German bombers raided her hometown of Liverpool each night. Betts was stationed in Liverpool as part of a balloon barrage brigade. She and her crew would launch hot air blimps attached to the ground by metal cables.

What made these weapons effective was not the balloon, but the cable, which would shear the wings off of any low flying German airplanes.

"You drove a winch and (the balloons) went out in a cable up into the sky. They were all over town," Betts told her granddaughter. "We'd wait for the air raid to go and as soon as the air raid siren went we would run out and put the balloons up. They were all tethered down. We had to undo them and wench them up there."

Later in the war Betts was stationed in London, where the balloons were used against the German V-1 rockets, called "doodlebugs" by the Brits.

While American civilians certainly encountered the hardships of war, those hardships were dwarfed by what the people of England had to endure. Few went hungry in the farming communities of Minnesota and North Dakota. On the island of Great Britain, which was dependant on imported food and goods travelling through waters swarming with German submarines, the rationing was severe. Everything from meat and eggs to cloth and shoes were strictly rationed, and the English people were even encouraged to use no more than five inches of water for their baths!

Far worse than stretching a cup of sugar, or going without, were the bombs. The English home front was the front line during the Blitz.

In Liverpool, the light from the window of a careless neighbor could draw German night bombers like moths to a light bulb. The numbers tell the story: 90,000 British civilians were killed in the Second World War, compared to 5,000 Americans. Our allies in Russia, whose people suffered the constant horrors of Nazi invasion and occupation for four years, lost an estimated 11 million civilians.

It was in the service that Betts met a Clay County soldier named Lamont "Mont" Henry. Mont did not make a good first impression. He and two friends had a bit to drink when they came across Betts while she was on guard duty.

When she informed the Yanks that they were trespassing on Royal Air Force property, Mont was reluctant to leave. "I'll go if you make a date with me," the GI told the RAF guard.

"So I made a date with him. It could have been bad for me if I was caught," Betts recalled.



Betts Henry in uniform. Collection of Jessica Henry

Mont was not the only guy courting pretty Betts Humphries, but he was the most persistent. Even after what Betts described as a terrible first date, Mont persisted. His determination to win over Betts got her in trouble with her superiors who did not like such fraternization between soldiers.

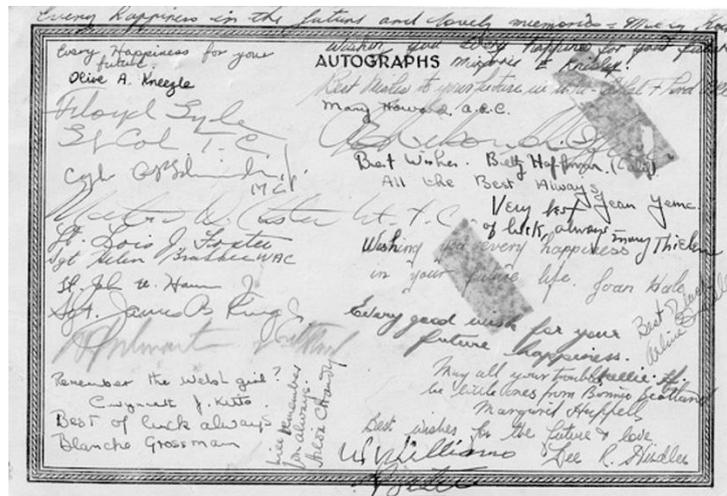
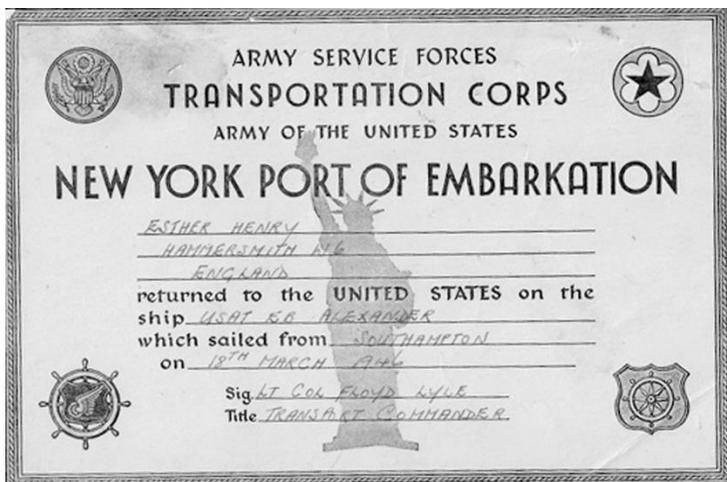
"...I was put on 10 days jankers (military slang for punishment or detention), scrubbing the stairs from the officers' places and peeling potatoes. The officers reported him to his commanding officer but they just laughed and didn't do anything to him, but I got 10 days jankers."

Mont Henry's persistence also got him a wife.

The two were able to get leave from their units to be married in Liverpool on December 2, 1944. Betts' brother Jim, serving in the Scottish Highlander's division, was unable to get leave to attend. Her brother Bill, an RAF pilot, had been killed three years before when his plane was shot down over Egypt.

"My mom was upset because I was marrying an American, although they loved Mont," Betts

CONTINUED ON PAGE 36



Betts Henry made friends with many of the other war brides on her journey from England to Minnesota. She collected some of their signatures on the back of this port of embarkation certificate. Collection of Jessica Henry

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## Twin Brothers Served In Iwo Jima Battle

The following story by Maxine Shulstad was originally published in two parts on February 14 and 21, 1995.

Shulstad, a local author and newspaper columnist, wrote for the Barnesville Record-Review for several years..

**By: Maxine Shulstad**

Identical twins, their mellow voices blend as one finishes the other's sentence. For 87 years they've shared joys, griefs and hard work.

And together, John and Engel Bergseid survived one of the most traumatic episodes of this century-Iwo Jima!

The oldest in a family of seven boys and two girls, Engel and John grew up in the hilly farm country of the Rollag area.

"We started school in Pelican...We couldn't speak any English...The third grade teacher helped us...She could speak Norwegian..."

And so it went, one filling in when the other paused.

Their ability to speak their grandparents' native tongue almost promised to be a lifetime experience. Their ability to handle caterpillars almost became their downfall.

Of draft age in 1943, the two went down to Fort Snelling for the annual pre-induction screenings. While there, John struck up a conversation with a Marine officer. When the man rattled off a spiel in Norwegian, the farm



John, left, and Engel Bergseid, of Rollag, joined the Marines on the promise that they could stay together and would be sent to Norway. Instead, they served together in the battles of Saipan, Tinian Island and Iwo Jima.

youth promptly replied in the same language.

The Marine was mighty interested in these two brothers who spoke Norwegian as fluently as any native. For we he looking for volunteers who were capable skiers and unafraid of using explosives.

Yes, the brothers were interested. With thoughts of their second cousins living under tyranny, they were certainly willing to help them fight the enemy.

Yes, providing...

The brothers insisted that they be together all the time.

The Marine gave his verbal word and signed a document guaranteeing that the twins would stay together.

John and Engel went off to boot camp dreaming of being able to go to Norway together.

So much for military promises. The only part of the bargain that was kept was that the two were virtually together at all times until discharge three years later.

While that had its virtues, being near each other in wartime

was also highly stressful.

Because of their skill in operating track-type machinery, the Marine Corps decided they would make better amph-trac drivers in the South Pacific than skiing around some mountainous country in Europe blowing up bridges.

Engel and John would wind up in the Fifth Amphibious Tractor Battalion.

Although the twins had individual characteristics easily recognizable to their friends, officers who weren't acquainted with them frequently misidentified one or the other. Sometimes to the chagrin of one of the brothers, always to the embarrassment of their superiors, and now regarded with amusement.

He laughs about it now, but at the time Engel was one mighty sore kid.

Part of every Marine's preparation for shipping out was getting seven medical shots. Engel got his at about 8:00 p.m.

Sometime during that night, he was awakened and ordered to get his shots. No amount of protest would convince the two burly corpsmen that he'd already had his. So he got John's shots too.

To add to the misery of two sore arms, Engel was one of several soldiers ordered on broom detail the next day. The others, including

John, were dismissed and headed for the stairs.

Minutes later, the sergeant who had ordered the detail glanced up to see John nearby

Muttering "...These new guys are no damn good," he told the company commander that he'd just sent that guy to sweep down the galley.

Grabbing John, he declared, "I'm going to make an example of you!"

At the foot of the stairs the sergeant saw Engel--and looked at John and said, "My god..."

"There were funny parts..." John said. But in his pause and the far away look in his blue eyes indicated that being near the closest and dearest person in the world is not good during battle.

Engel told of the time when an especially fierce battle was taking place a few miles away. He could see the action, and he knew that his brother was in the thick of it.

Headquarters hadn't told the Marines where they were headed upon leaving Hawaii. They found out on the radio from Tokyo Rose.

John and Engel would remain together throughout the battles of Saipan, Tinian Island and Iwo Jima.

At times, it almost seemed that these twins were blessed.

Like the time they were sitting  
**CONTINUED ON PAGE 51**



Five Marines and one Navy corpsman raise the American flag at the top of Mt. Suribachi, Iwo Jima's highest peak and most strategic position, on February 23, 1945. Joe Rosenthal's Pulitzer-prize-winning shot went on to be among the most reproduced photographs in history.

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# Hawley Native Stormed Beaches As WWII Engineer

**By: Jacob Underlee**

*The following story is taken from an interview with Erwin Johnson, as well as his recorded war memories from the Prairie Public WWII Veterans Program.*

Erwin Johnson planned to join the military for just one year as an alternative to college. Five years later he had participated in amphibious landings in Italy, stormed Normandy on D-Day, and participated in the Battle of the Bulge.

Left-handed Erwin "Lefty" Johnson was born and raised in Hawley, MN. He graduated from high school and continued on to the University of Minnesota to pursue a career in engineering. However, he soon ran low on money and decided to join the military.

"I think my dad figured a year in the Army would do me some good," he said. "And maybe I did too!"

Johnson signed up for the Army Corps of Engineers at Fort Snelling in November of 1941. A month later an event occurred that dramatically changed the course of his life.

"I was at my uncle's house the day they bombed Pearl Harbor and the whole world changed," he said.

While Johnson was stationed at Fort Leonard Wood, MO, he received a commission to attend a military school for engineers at Fort Belvoir, VA, in June 1942. At the same time he was assigned to join the 531st Engineer Shore Regiment forming at Camp Edwards, MA.

"The 531st was designed and planned to provide services to units that were making amphibious landings," Johnson said. "We would provide backup."

He was assigned as platoon leader. "That would be my home for the next three-and-a-half years," Johnson said.

In late August 1942, the 531st loaded onto boats and joined a British convoy headed for Europe. After a brief stop in Northern Ireland, the troops arrived in Scotland and met up with the 1st Infantry Division, the group they would be supporting on the battlefield.

The soldiers packed onto ships and sailed past Gibraltar, landing in North Africa. It was an easy landing, with none of the expected trouble from the French Foreign Legion.

The soldiers set to work cleaning up the area for other boats to arrive. A school was built to instruct the troops on how to invade foreign beaches. It



Erwin "Lefty" Johnson, pictured in England in 1944, served five years in the Army Corps of Engineers. He participated in four beach landings, including Normandy on D-Day. He also served in the Battle of the Bulge.

lasted all winter, with the soldiers conducting several "problems," or exercises that simulated battlefield situations.

Johnson's detail received the first amphibious track vehicle delivered to the area. In one simulation, the "amph" truck was driven through barbed wire and became tangled and inoperative.

Johnson was among the soldiers underneath the vehicle trying to cut it free when he heard a banging and a shout of "Who's in charge?"

"I crawled out, looked, and here's General George Patton looking me in the eye," Johnson said. "He wanted to know what I was doing. I told him, and after a moment he said, 'Well, we think you could've done something different.' He used some language I won't use now, but anyway, he fined me \$50 and said get back to work."

The next day the fine was removed. Apparently it was a move often used by Patton to deal with problems among the junior officers.

"About 30 feet behind Patton stood Dwight Eisenhower, Bernard Montgomery and Omar Bradley," Johnson said. "So here's the whole staff of the European Theater of Operations down there on the beaches of Africa in

the middle of the night, trying to decide if we can have a simulation with no lights at night."

In fact, the simulation never got much further. As the attempts continued, a machine operator who was working to smooth out the ground nearby shifted into reverse and almost hit Eisenhower.

"He was within feet of getting run over. That's how close it was," Johnson said. "That never made the news, but it ended the simulation right there."

The platoon met up with the 1st Infantry Division at Algiers to prepare for the invasion of Sicily near Gela.

"I had a platoon of engineers and my equipment," Johnson said. "We came onto the beach with the first wave of the reconnaissance. This is about the same time as the infantry. We were unlucky enough to land in front of a machine gun that was still active."

Johnson directed most of his platoon into hiding places among sand dunes on the beach. Then he and five soldiers removed the machine gun and regrouped.

After the initial fight was over, it was time to start the engineering duties to help clear the beach.

"This was the first time we had an operation that involved a lot of engineer support, and it was my first combat," Johnson explained.

"We cleaned up minefields and built roads."

Minefield cleaning was the first duty. Even when the engineers weren't under direct fire, minefield cleaning was a dangerous task. The 531st was equipped with 18-inch probes that had a length of rope ending with a hook.

The soldiers would move around the area, find, and hook onto hidden mines. Once the mine was hooked, the engineers backed up the entire length of the rope and pulled the active mine out of the ground.

However, safety wasn't always guaranteed. Sometimes the mines would be booby-trapped with a second explosive hidden beneath the first.

"You had to be very careful with this clearing," Johnson said. "Even then every once in a while you made a mistake and missed a mine."

Once the mines were cleared, traffic lanes could be created to move the unloaded ship cargo across the beach.

"We were there for about three weeks, until the island was secure and no longer had a need for beach operations," said Johnson of his platoon's time in Gela, Sicily.

The soldiers returned to Iran for some expected R&R, but instead began preparing for another, secret invasion. Rumors flew at the local bars and among the troops, but Johnson never put much stock into what he heard.

Finally the troops were loaded into ships and told the destination-Salerno, Italy, just as the rumors had said. However, they weren't the only ones who had heard of the

military's plans to invade.

When they landed at the island of Salerno to support the Texas National Guard 36th Infantry Unit, the Germans were waiting.

"They had a bad time of it," Johnson said of the infantry unit, which was having its first combat experience. "They had a lot of casualties on the beach because the Germans were ready. The only reason they didn't have more casualties is because the Germans ran out of ammunition."

The enemy had been tipped off, but hadn't had enough time to fully prepare for the invasion. Because of that, the 36th Infantry Unit wasn't completely wiped out, and Johnson's platoon only suffered minor casualties.

"Our losses were very limited at Salerno," Johnson said. "We were lucky."

Nevertheless, the platoon did lose a few men when they were pinned down for half an hour by German 6-millimeter mortar attacks.

The men were also harassed by a German 88 mm gun located on the high ground beyond the beach. For several days it attacked targets of opportunity

"They were one-shot kills every time," Johnson said. "It was a very accurate gun."

The 88 helped the Germans dominate the battle for the first week, until it was destroyed by a night drop attack by the 82nd Airborne Division.

Meanwhile, the engineers were busy cleaning the minefield they had studied in reconnaissance photos.

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## Serving On The Admiralty Islands In WWII

**By: Jacob Underlee**

Edmund Hohenstern had been a farmer for the majority of his life when WWII sent him on a trek across several islands in the South Pacific.

Hohenstern was born in Mantador, ND, in 1923. He came of age in the "Dirty Thirties," along with five brothers and one sister. As a child he was part of the day-to-day operations on the farm, which began at 7 a.m. each morning.

"We'd each have to milk two cows, and carry the milk down to the basement," he said. "Then our mother would have our oatmeal ready for breakfast."

The kids walked half a mile to a one-room schoolhouse in conditions ranging from dust storms to double-digit negative temperatures, depending on the season.

"It was so dry in those days you couldn't get any weeds to grow," he said. "It seemed like we got about 25 drops of rain."

Hohenstern was 12 years old when his father suffered a stroke and died, leaving him and his older brothers to run the farm.

Times were tough, but the children had been raised to not ask for handouts, including welfare.

"A lot of people got it all around us, but as farmers we never accepted any of that stuff," he said. "At that time it was practically a crime if you took something that was given to you that you didn't really need."

The only time Hohenstern's mother accepted a donation, equal to about \$5.00 for new underwear and shoes for the children, she took the items home and hid them out of shame.

With chickens, pigs, ducks and geese on the farm, the family never went hungry. Flour and sugar, the two things that couldn't be produced on the farm, were stored in the attic in 100 and 150-pound bags.

When WWII began, Hohenstern's brother volunteered for service with a friend and became a mechanic. Another brother was drafted into the infantry a year later.

"He didn't want to walk, walk every day," Hohenstern said. "So he volunteered for the paratroopers. But I would say that



Edmund Hohenstern grew up near Hankinson, ND. He was drafted into the military in 1945, and served on islands throughout the Pacific, including the Admiralty Islands.

was even worse."

With two members of the family fighting for Uncle Sam, Hohenstern figured his time was coming too. However, he received a letter saying he had been given

a farm deferment to continue working the land. He would not be joining the fight. Or so he thought.

"They were getting hard up for men, so I got in there in 1945," he said. "My brothers were both in the Army. They said if you're going to be drafted, go into the Navy. So I was in the Navy CBs."

Hohenstern entered the service on March 29, 1945. He completed basic training and was sent to Camp Parks Navy Base in California, where he was assigned to the 140th Navy CB (Construction Battalion) Division. The troops were to be sent overseas to replace soldiers that had been in the Pacific theater for long periods of time.

Before he could leave, however, there was one more skill for Hohenstern to learn. He and about 50 other men were held back and taught to swim.

As a child, Hohenstern never had the chance to go to a swimming pool. In fact, the next best option was a dirty river about a mile away from the farm, "But there was more mud than in there than water," he said.

It took about four weeks, but eventually the final swimming

test arrived. All the soldiers were required to climb a 30-foot tower and jump into 10 feet of water. Hohenstern remembers watching a young man from New York ahead of him in line.

"It took three big guys to push him off that tower," he said. "And when he came down there he flew like a bird."

When his turn came, Hohenstern briefly tried turning back, but was "colorfully" told to keep moving.

"Boy, I tell you, that looked pretty deep," he said of the view from the tower. "They gave me a push and I went down. But by that time the fear was out of me. I could've walked around and done it again."

Now a certified swimmer, he boarded a ship and sailed under the Golden Gate Bridge towards the Pacific.

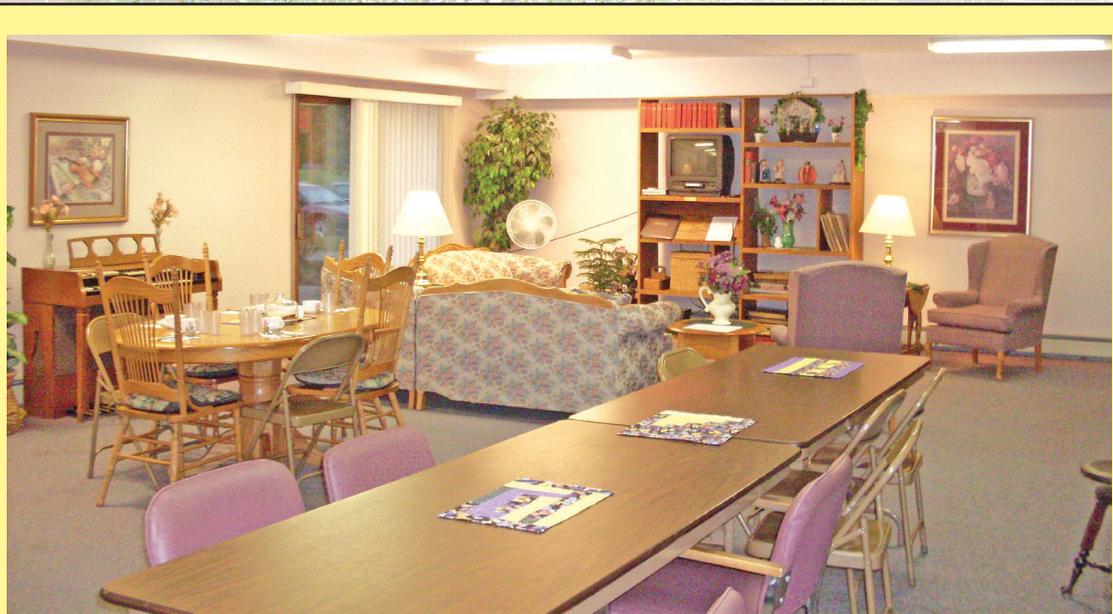
The vessel was battered by 15-foot-waves during during a storm on the way overseas. The men were kept below deck in the ship's hold.

"They wouldn't let us out because we were likely to be

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 32**

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# Beth (Hopeman) Dille: College Girl

**By: Maureen Kelly Jonason**

Picture Beth Dille driving a fork lift. Although it might be hard to imagine, Beth was a kind of Rosie-the-Riveter for a time during WWII.

Beth Hopeman was born in Fargo's St. John's Hospital in 1924, but she grew up in Moorhead next to the Prairie Home Cemetery. Back then, that was the edge of town! She learned how to drive on the then-nearly-rural 12th Avenue road with big ditches on either side.

Before that, she attended kindergarten at Moorhead Normal School's Campus School, recalling, at age five, the big fire of 1929 in which her doll was burned. The year 1936 brought both record heat in summer and the coldest winter.

"People were sleeping in the parks," Beth recalled, on the 114-degree day which was the hottest in Minnesota history. The Red was running low with the drought, and Fargo's water was "terrible." Moorhead residents visiting Fargo made sure to have a drink of water at home before going over.

As a teenager, she had not been particularly aware of the war going on. By the time the US joined the war, Beth was in the middle of her senior year of high school. On the Monday morning after the Pearl Harbor bombing, her entire band class, with music teacher Leif Christiansen, sat listening to President Roosevelt on the radio.

A couple of her male high school classmates left immediately to join the military. When the men got called up, they would report in at the Armory. She recalled that the high school band sometimes went down and played for the soldiers' send-offs.

After high school graduation, she looked for work and found it at a dime store in Fargo, where she clerked for 25 cents per hour for a couple of summers between academic years attending Concordia Collage. Later, looking for better pay, she worked a summer at Manchester Biscuit at 42 cents per hour. Men were the bakers and women could be "a cracker packer or a cookie picker." Fig Newton days were the worst since the fingers got coated with the sticky filling. It was warm work, and workers took salt pills to stay hydrated.

One summer, she and her friends heard through the grapevine that there were well-paying jobs in Spokane. They wanted adventure and they wanted to be away from their parents, so



Beth Hopeman Dille began her adult life seeing the world in World War II.

they took the train to Spokane.

They became civilian employees of the Spokane Air Service Command at the Fairchild Air Force Base. She recalls taking a typing test and being assigned as a "warehouseman." She drove jeeps and operated fork lifts. Used merchandise would come in from the European front and had to be stored until it could be deployed to the troops in the Pacific.

The women lived in wooden dorms, two to a room, and took buses into town for entertainment. They ate out a lot, especially at hotels. Beth recalls going for ice cream and being asked "hard or soft?" She had no idea what they meant. It was the first time she had eaten soft-serve. They met people from all over the country working in Spokane during the war.

After working 40 hours per week at 89 cents per hour, they had the weekends off to explore the big city and take in the sights. They also volunteered at the USO. Some made coffee while Beth recalls changing sheets on "acres and acres of bunk beds" for the troops stopping in for a rest. They went to the movies and wrote letters home, did their weekly shopping and went swimming.

still all women, and there were very few men to date until the troops started coming home.

When she graduated in 1946, teachers were needed all over. She chose to go to Dassel, MN because she had visited family there, and four buses per day went into Minneapolis. She had actually met her husband-to-be, Roland Dille, while still in high school, but they became reacquainted as he was attending the University of Minnesota as a freshman, having delayed his schooling to serve in the military.

They married in 1948 and lived in Minneapolis while he finished his degree. She did some subbing. The Dassel School District hired them both for one year while he was completing his degree and then they moved out to California for a number of years before returning to Moorhead for Roland

to work at MSU.

The 1940s "weren't terrible years unless you lost someone in the war," Beth concludes. "We got to 'see the world!'"



Beth Hopeman Dille's college graduation photo - Concordia College 1946



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## MN Native Recalls Time As Engineer



Cal Boen moved to Barnesville in March 2005. The Mahnomen native served in postwar Berlin for 10 months.

**By: Jacob Underlee**

As a child, Cal Boen plowed fields with teams of four and five horses. As a young man he served in the United States Army as part of the 78th Infantry Division mounted cavalry in Germany in the aftermath of World War II.

A native of Mahnomen, MN, he was born the oldest of seven children on October 12, 1926. Boen helped out on the farm all his life.

"I remember as a kid being 13 years old, with three horses on a single plow," he said. "I got to be 14 or 15 and I handled five horses on a two-bottom plow."

Boen often had to skip class to finish his work

"A lot of us older guys didn't go to high school," Boen explained

He completed eighth grade and continued to work on the farm. After he turned 18 in October 1944, he traveled to Fort Snelling for a physical examination to determine his readiness for the war draft.

"I got put in Class A1," he said. "There were some that were a different grade so they probably never got drafted."

Months later he received the call to serve his country when he

was drafted in January 1945. Boen traveled to Fort Riley, KS, for basic training.

"We were training with horses," Boen said. "I was in the cavalry because of my farm background."

He and his fellow soldiers were preparing to ship out to Burma, now known as Myanmar, to work as mounted troops in the southeastern Asian country.

"We trained with riding and then we trained with pack horses, where you had to learn to put packs on them with guns and so forth," Boen said.

An ear infection in March sidelined Boen for a month, followed by a convalescence leave that sent him back to Minnesota. When the atomic bombs were dropped on Japan, the plans changed.

"Combat was over," Boen said, "but we finished our training."

The soldiers were sent to Ford Ord, CA, to be part of the postwar occupational forces. A new re-enlistment program gave the choice of where to serve.

"In the program you could designate where you'd go for occupational forces, Germany or Japan," he said. "I put down Germany."

Boen shipped out from Norfolk, VA, on December 15, 1945. The trip overseas took 10 days because of a storm that rocked the boat in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, but the troops arrived in time for Christmas dinner at Le Havre, France.

Boen later arrived at Berlin inside a 40 and 8 boxcar, which is a train car designed to hold either 40 men or eight horses.

"I spent the next 10 months in Berlin," Boen said.

He was assigned to a 50-man horse platoon as part of the 78th Infantry Division.

"Most of us guys were farm boys," Boen said of his fellow soldiers. "We had some from Arkansas, Ohio, New York, Michigan, Tennessee, Minnesota, Texas."

The platoon worked with

German horses and cavalymen and helped in training.

"The Germans, they were nice," Boen said of his time overseas. "They were easy, industrious, busy rebuilding."

The soldiers also prepared for special military parades and ceremonies involving dignitaries. On Memorial Day weekend of 1946 the platoon escorted the visiting General Dwight D. Eisenhower in a military parade.

After the war, Berlin was quartered into British, French, American and Soviet zones. The troops usually stayed in their own sector, but "a couple of us guys were adventurous," Boen said.

Boen also got a preview of the future American interstate system when he traveled on the German Autobahn.

"That's why we got the Interstate system," he said. "That's

where Eisenhower got the idea."

Boen left Berlin in October 1946. The trip back to America was free of storms and went much faster.

"We ran close along so you could see the white cliffs of Dover in England," he said.

Boen was discharged from the military at Fort Dix, NJ, with the rank of corporal.

He returned to farming his family's land near Mahnomen, and married his first wife, Verna, in 1948. The couple had eight children together: Nadine, Kevin, Noreen, Naomi, Natalie, Kerri, Kandace and Kathy. Verna died in 1985.

In the 1950s Boen became interested in fertilizer after a successful test run of anhydrous

**CONTINUED TO PAGE 40**

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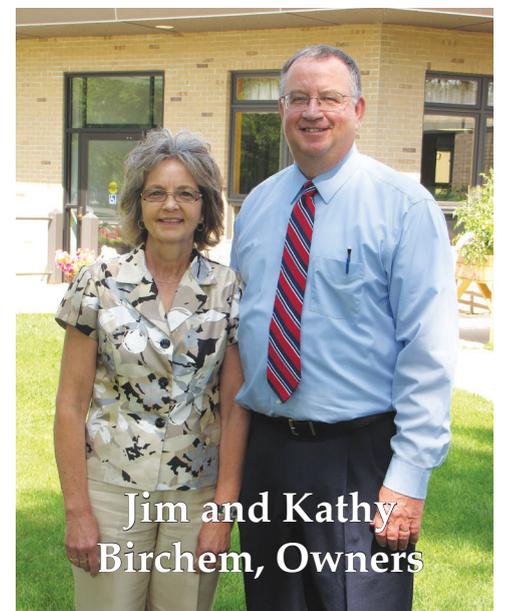


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# Baron Recalls Growing Up In The 1940s

**By: Maureen Kelly Jonason**

Walking into Elaine Baron's apartment, one can't help but get the feeling she likes cats. Cat statues decorate the entrance, and rows of cat knick-knacks line



Elaine Baron, photo taken from the Concordia College Archives.

her shelves. Although Elaine Baron was born and raised in North Dakota, her ties to Clay County are long. She graduated from Concordia College and she was a volunteer at Moorhead's Hjemkomst Center for 25 years.

Born in McClusky, ND in 1927, she grew up in nearby Denhoff, ND during the "Dirty Thirties." Her father ran a general store and throughout the Great Depression, he kept long lists of the people who owed money for purchasing merchandise on account. One vivid memory of those hard times was of her father and the postmaster taking Christmas dinner out to a large family in need. The store survived through the 1930s and '40s.

Her father, Dick Baron, was German-from-Russia and her mother, Goldie Skeie, was full-blooded Norwegian. It was from her that Elaine developed a strong



Elaine Baron stands by her collection of cat figurines. Her love of cats started when she was a young girl.

interest in preserving Norwegian heritage and thus was drawn to the Hjemkomst Center.

Elaine recalls that since they ran a general store, they never particularly wanted for food. As a child, she worked in the store afternoons and Saturdays. Her position was behind the candy counter, she shared with a smile, while her younger brother candled eggs. They started keeping cats at the store to battle the mice, and there started her love of cats.

As a teenager in the early '40s, Elaine filled her days with reading and friends. Her family traveled a little, including a trip to Calgary on the Fourth of July, during which they spent the night in the car because her parents hadn't made motel reservations not imagining there would be a problem finding a room!

She recalls eating Sunday dinner and listening to the radio when the attack on Pearl Harbor was announced. It was "scary" listening to President Roosevelt call December 7 "the date that will live in infamy."

"Blue tokens and red tokens the size of dimes and hard as cardboard" determined the amount of meat and sugar one could buy. Though they ran a store, they could not have anything the customers might have wanted. Once the war started, her small class reduced to five or six girls and the one boy who was deferred to stay home and farm.

Back then they were allowed a "skip day" or two from high school. Her class joined the junior class in putting on a play to earn funds for a trip to Bismarck. To

get there, they all sat in the back of a truck on benches. They went to the basketball tournaments at the WWI Memorial Center.

She vividly recalls they toured a creamery where she witnessed a taster stick his finger into a haystack mound of butter, lick it, and stick it in again. "It was a long time before I ate butter again," quipped Elaine.

For their second "skip day," they ventured to Fargo. The pastor chaperoned. They stayed at the Powers Hotel on Broadway and "didn't dare walk any further than the Fargo Theatre" because the roads were darkened by a black out. Later, she would walk down Broadway and celebrate the end of the war with public parades.

Elaine graduated from high school in 1945 and at that time, because her father was facing health problems, they sold the store and all moved to Fargo. Her brother finished high school at Oak Grove while she attended Concordia College. Elaine had been a good accompanist for the church, and so her pastor encouraged her to go into music. She received a scholarship for the \$100 required for one semester of tuition.

Elaine lived at home with her parents and went to campus each day. Back then the new Fjelstad Hall had a room for off-campus students to study and eat lunch. Prexy's Pond always had something going on around it, and the chapel had numbered seats and students sat in alphabetical order. Being a B, she was always in the front row. Like other women who attended college in the war years,

she was keenly aware of the low male attendance.

She enjoyed math and eventually majored in it, but since her high school had never offered geometry, she and other similar students had to go to Moorhead High to take geometry there before taking more advanced classes at Concordia. She distinctly recalls that the guys in the class seemed to be put off by her excelling at math. She was particularly interested in working with statistics. She had wanted to go to New York to work, but they required experience and she didn't have any.

Throughout college she worked at a grocery store, and the man who owned it had told her, "Don't spend all your money, buy telephone stock. That's a good place to work." Like many people, she invested in savings bonds, and she also decided to go to work for the telephone company. She ended up working there for 33 years, living at home, and taking early retirement to take care of her mother.

She began volunteering at the Hjemkomst Center when it opened in 1986 partly because of her Norwegian background and partly because she knew Robert Asp.

Like many local people, she followed the building and sailing of the ship. In her home, over the rows of ceramic cats, hangs the Norwegian table prayer, further testament to her interest in preserving her cultural heritage. The Hjemkomst Center turned out to be a good place for Elaine and for 25 years, she volunteered four hours every single week, retiring only recently.

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## "Doing Your Part" Was Goal During WWII

CONTNUED FROM PAGE 14

for a home life. So Carol did what service wives grew accustomed to doing; she scoured stores for odds and ends to make her small apartment a little cozier, looked after the baby and massaged the family's shoestring budget.

She tried not to think about the fact that dozens of servicemen were killed in training crashes with alarming frequency.

Carol made fleeting friendships with the wives of other fliers, achingly aware that at any moment one or another of them would soon be following her fly guy to another base, another tiny room in an equally tiny town, never to be seen again. She knew that at some point the orders would come sending her off in the same manner.

Then Coughlin did get his orders and Carol drove him to Omaha where he flew off to the Aleutian Islands.

There were no facilities for dependents of servicemen on the bleak Aleutians where winds topping 80 miles an hour could push a four-engine bomber right off an airstrip, and off-duty maintenance crews had nothing to do except play cards, patch cracks in walls of their huts, and curse the weather.

Carol decided "to be on my own and I would make it on my own."

I would not be one of these kids who went home to mother."

She returned to Oklahoma and took a job working as a housekeeper for a woman who



Carol Raff was about 17 in this photo (from MSUM archives). She is the centerpiece of the section on the war's impact on people. Carol married in 1942, her husband went to serve in the Aleutian Islands and she raised their son alone until the war ended. After the war her husband remained in the Air Force and she lived with him and her son on military bases. She was in Berlin during the 1948 Berlin Airlift. I think Carol is now in California, and she is a widow.

lived in a sprawling Victorian house.

"I lived in the servants' quarters, cleaned her house for her, churned her butter, and fed her cats, whatever else she wanted me to do.

She paid me 30 dollars a month for this, provided my housing, but not my food." Supplementing her

pay with the money she received from the military as a serviceman's wife, she was able to make ends meet for herself and Douglas.

Loneliness became her constant companion. "We had attended the Methodist church at the base there, where my husband had sung in the choir. And there were two couples still there that were especially close friends of mine."

But the demands of her job, the needs of her son, and the limits on how much gasoline she could get with ration coupons, put a limit on how often she could go visit her friends.

She received letters from Fred, who had moved on from the Aleutians to the more hospitable

climate of Anchorage, Alaska, but it wasn't hard to see that "the biggest difficulty he had was being lonesome too."

*Time* magazine reported in 1944 that thousands of servicemen and their spouses were being given psychiatric counseling over loneliness.

Carol was "no longer a pacifist." She now accepted that fighting Japan and Germany "was the only moral thing America could do."

But she also felt that if women were expected to be part of the war, they should also have a say in the peace that followed.

She agreed with the views of Eleanor Roosevelt: women should

be "in every meeting which deals with postwar problems.

Men and women will have to live in this new world together. They should begin now to build it together."

But Carol could not do this until Fred came home. She raised their son alone until the war ended. After the war, her husband remained with the Air Force and she lived with him and her son on military bases.

She was in Berlin during the 1948 Berlin Airlift. Carol is now widowed and lives in Minneapolis.

*Making use of interviews with residents living in Clay County during the war, "Fighting For Their Lives" examines how men and women lived on the local home front during World War II. In addition to covering the usual home front topics -- rationing, prisoners of war, changes in the lives of women -- the author also examines how the war changed the ideas that Americans had in regard to international affairs and the nation's role in the world. Using the interviews, newspaper opinion, and a variety of original documents, the author shows that the "Good War" was really a time of enormous challenge and sadness, an era that re-forged the thoughts of ordinary citizens from then to the present day.*

If you are at all interested in purchasing the electronic book, please contact Mark Peihl at Historical Cultural Society of Clay County / HCSCC: 218-299-5511 Ext. 6732 or mark.peihl@ci.moorhead.mn.us.



Byron Murray, a teacher in the English dept at Moorhead State Teachers Collge now MSUM. Murray wrote the editorials for the "Moorhead Daily News" so his opinions about WWII were read throughout Clay County. Murray taught at MSU until he retired in the late 1960s and he passed away in 1986.



St. Joseph's Church in Moorhead operated a "day care center" for the children of migrant workers in 1943 and 1944. This enabled the county to recruit more workers during the war, when labor was harder to find.

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# Hi Drache Was Navigator During Raids

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

more so because the English airfields were crowded with newly arriving airplanes.

Valley, Wales and Stone, England are two other places Drache saw before July 23, when they delivered a plane to the depot at Bovington, England.

After delivering the plane, Drache and his team were assigned a different B-17, which they named "Thy Will be Done."

On August 4 they flew to their base, Glatton, located near Connington, eight miles south of Peterborough and about 70 miles north of London.

During those 17 months Drache and the crew had gone from raw recruits to a trained team flying out of England that would be charged with precision daylight bombings of German targets.

They were assigned to the 748th squadron, 457th Bomb Group, 1st Air Division of the 8th Air Force. At the time the standard tour of duty for an aircrew was 25 missions. Most of the early aircrews did not live to complete their tour of duty.

Drache served as a First Lieutenant on his first mission. He mustered out of the service as a major after the war and returned to college to earn his doctorate. The rest, as they say, is history.

Between August 14, 1944 and January 22, 1945, Drache would fly 30 combat missions over Germany and Nazi-occupied countries in Europe.

He accumulated 216.10 hours of combat flight time while serving as a navigator on a B-17 bomber. One in four of the B17



The picture shows the crew of "Thy Will Be Done", a B-17G-90-BO, taken at their base in England. Caption reads - "Dec. 1944; My crew for 19 missions Aug. 14-Nov. 2, 1944 Glatton Air Base"

The officers are in the back row. Hiram Drache, Navigator, is on the right. Crew consisted of: Donald Zeiler, pilot; Sidney A. Bacon, copilot; William Cecil Oliver, bombardier; Hiram Drache, navigator; Dominic Muscato, radio operator; Samuel "Blackie" Gelvin, engineer & top turret gunner; Carl Lewis, right waist gunner; Don Swisher, left waist gunner; Stanley Patterson, ball turret gunner; and James Rodell, tail gunner.

bomber crews would be killed in action while participating in the air attacks to soften up Germany.

The following article is based on interviews with him, and on his

archives at Concordia and MSUM.

---

It was August 30, 1944, and Hiram Drache's sixth mission as a navigator on the B-17. The crew's task was to bomb the German submarine pens at Kiel.

They approached at 21,000 feet altitude, well within the range of German anti-aircraft guns. This was the most dangerous part of the mission, because you had to fly 'straight and level' on the bomb run. The German gunners could see you, and they knew exactly where you were going. All they had to do was dial in the right numbers on their equipment to deliver a hailstorm of flak to knock you out of the sky.

They made it to the target release point and dropped their

bombs. As they turned back toward their base at Glatton, England, their B-17 was hit, knocking out both engines on the right wing - numbers three and

four.

The pilot quickly shut down the damaged engines and feathered the props to minimize drag.

Drache and his crew were 400 miles from their base. With two engines out they would be lucky to maintain the necessary 120 miles per hour airspeed necessary to keep the plane in the air. At that rate, it would take over three hours to get home.

The undamaged engines on the left wing, numbers one and two, would be overloaded so they would overheat and eventually fail, probably in less than three hours. That was a very serious problem, but they had time to deal with it.

The immediate problem was that their B-17 was barely controllable due to the asymmetric thrust and low speed. Upsets due to flak explosions or maneuvering to avoid flak or fighters could easily put the plane into a stall or spin.

A stall was no problem at 21,000 feet, but a spin would be. The B-17 Flying Fortress Pilot's Manual said, "SPINS ... The airplane is not designed for spinning, and this maneuver should never be attempted."

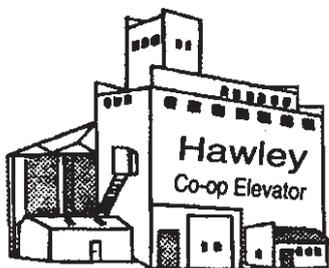
Then it happened - they spun. The right wing was now fully stalled and the left one was still flying. The B-17 rotated toward the stalled wing, taking perhaps a second to complete each rotation. Simultaneously, the nose had pitched down at an alarming angle.

Drache's navigator station in a B-17 was in the nose, right behind the bombardier. Both of

CONTINUED ON PAGE 29

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Top five birth countries for Clay County immigrants in 2000 - 1. Mexico 2. Iraq 3. Canada 4. Vietnam 5. Germany

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Please join me in supporting the HCSCC through your membership, your volunteer time and your attendance at sponsored events. You can join in the fun and get started by attending the Gala on October 28th. I hope to see you there.

It is a pleasure representing you on the Clay County Commission.

Sincerely, Jon Evert

This ad was prepared and paid for on his own behalf.





## B-17's Were Workhorse For Drache

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 28

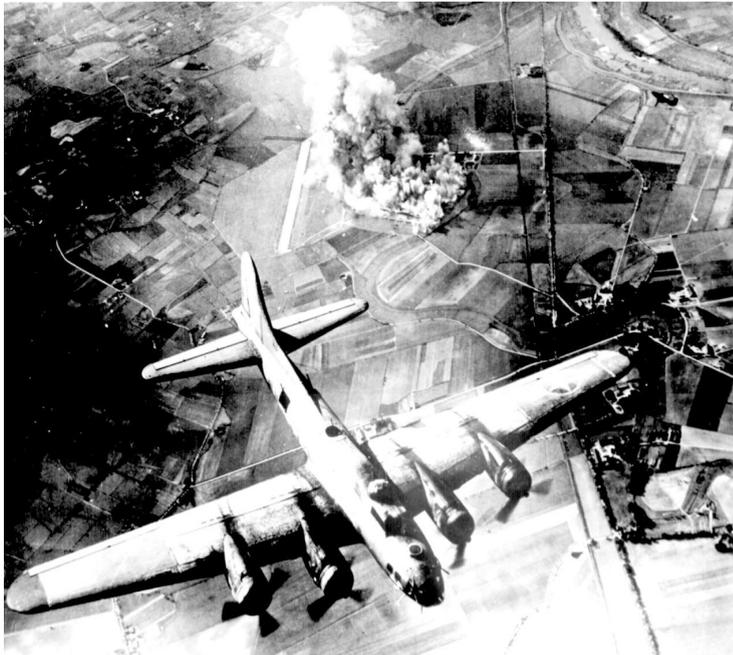
them now had a better view of the countryside below than they really wanted. The centrifugal force of the spin was so strong that Hiram noticed he was standing on a wall of the B-17 and his body was horizontal.

They didn't know exactly how fast they were going down – but it was several thousand feet per minute. This sounds fast, and it is, but they were four miles above the ground when they entered the spin.

So, the pilot had at least a minute, and probably more, to try to recover. There was nothing they could do to help. All they could do was contemplate their almost certain death.

At only 4,000 feet above the ground, the pilot managed to recover from the spin.

Now, should they go to England or to Sweden? Which was closer? The four officers preferred England, with the exception of the



In this National Archive photo a B-17 Bomber flies over war-torn Germany in 1944, leaving behind the smoldering rubble of a military target. The bomber is similar to one flown by Dr. Hiram Drache, and the one that was on display at the Fargo Air Museum on July 7 and 8, 2009 and July 19 and 20, 2011.

co-pilot, who was noncommittal. Four of the enlisted men preferred Sweden, but the two who were married preferred England.

The pilot asked his navigator, Hiram Drache, "Can you get me home?" Drache said, "If you can hold the plane up, I can get you home because my equipment is in good enough shape."

They leveled off and headed straight west. The pilot gave orders to lighten the B-17 by throwing everything out. Boxes of ammunition went out, gun barrels went out. Everything that could be dismantled was tossed overboard. The waist gunners even managed to remove and throw out their armor plate.

Then the pilot beckoned Hiram to come back, not over the intercom, but quietly. He didn't want to disturb the crew. He said, "Would you go and see how the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 48



Top five birth countries for Clay County immigrants in 1900 – 1. Norway (3,001 people) 2. Sweden (1,262) 3. Germany (687) 4. Canada (465) 5. England (152)

\*\*\*

According to the 1870 census, 65% of the population of Clay County were immigrants. Of course, there were only 141 people living here at the time.

Here are a few journal entries from Drache's diary that covers only a two-month span in the intense action that these young men faced on a daily basis.

### AIR FORCE ITINERARY FROM DIARY OF H.M. DRACHE

- August 14 Stuttgart-first-quiet
- Aug. 15 Local
- Aug. 16 Leipzig rough, 1 hit, 1 plane
- Aug. 17 Local
- Aug. 24 Weimar rough, 2 planes down
- Aug. 25 Lens, Belgium - quiet; asst. lead with Glen Marsden, no flak, no fighters; not with our crew
- Aug. 27 Berlin - turned back, bad weather
- Aug. 30 Kiel - #1 & 2 engines out over target; bomb bays wouldn't close; threw everything out; nearly shot down over Helgoland by 5 ME-110s, saved by 3 P51s; crashed on English coast
- Aug. 31 Local
- Sept. 8 Flying spare - turned back in middle of channel
- Sept. 9 Ludwigshafen - bad weather; 12 flak holes in plane; gas tank out.
- Sept. 10 Karlsruhe - lost 4 ships; we got no flak.
- Sept. 12 Rhuland - plenty of F.W. 190; we lost many planes--45 bombers, 17 fighters.
- Sept. 13 Merseburg -Giessen - moderate flak, no fighters; lost 132 bombers on 11, 12, & 13; Germany lost 300 fighters.
- Sept. 16 Local
- Sept. 23 Local
- Sept. 26 Osnabruck - lost 3 men, 1 ship, hit R.R. yards.
- Sept. 27 Cologne - no losses, river flak; hydraulic system out.
- Sept. 28 Magdeburg -lost 7 ships, we were only crew that got back. Gamboa (pilot) crash landed at Brussels. Really wonderful time in Brussels from 28-30. People treated us so good. Free hotel, train & food. Had ice cream, Metropole, Cavaret, Luxembourg Club, Cosmopolitan & Plaza Hotel. Saw FW-190 & JU-88 that Germans left. Hit a German bomb when we ground looped; landed at 155 MPH. Had 48 hour pass, then Gamboa got flak leave. A German major general slept in my bed the night before Flew back from Brussels on a C-47.
- Sept. 30 Local
- Oct. 3 Cologne - flew at 29,500-above complete overcast and heavy contrails; plenty of flak but no hits in 20 minutes of shelling.
- Oct. 5 Politz - Lost both leads and all 3 ships ahead of us; we were No. 1 low box lead sqd; had 3 holes in the nose; lost 4 planes, Jennings and Swartz.
- Oct. 10 Local
- Oct. 12 Cologne - scrubbed

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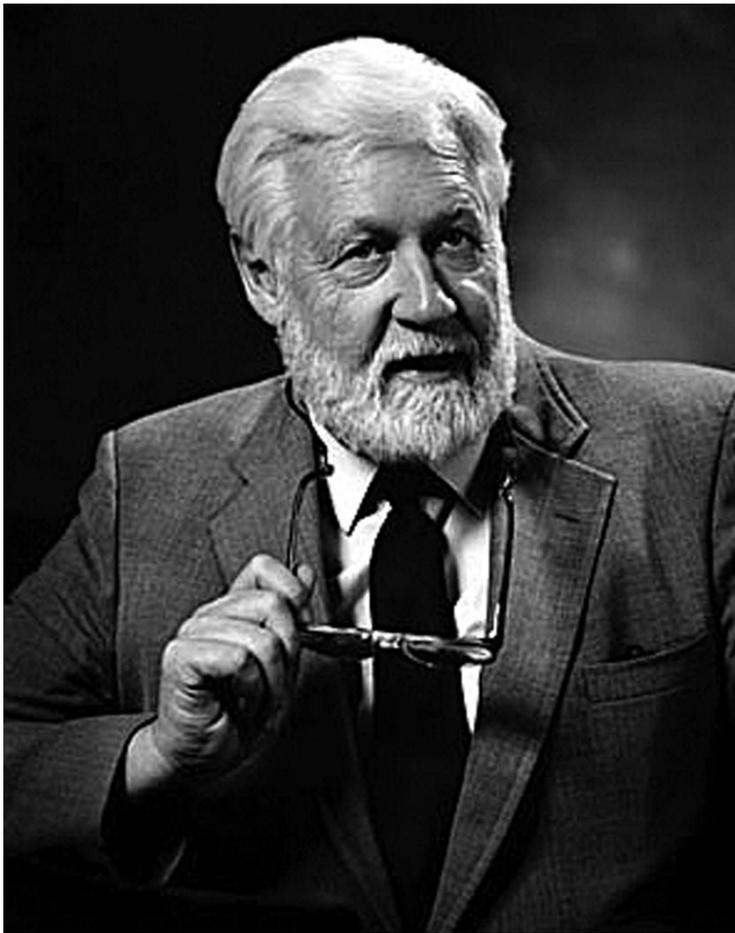
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# Roland Dille Receives 2011 Heritage Award



Dille began teaching at Moorhead State University in 1966. He later became dean and was eventually named president in 1968. Among his many interests, Dille is a history enthusiast who has written several articles about his hometown of Dassel, as well as local Clay County history.

## CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

had reviewed the grades from his freshman year.

"He wrote that if I completed the rest of the requirements I could be in graduate school," Dille said. "I walked around for a couple weeks with that in my pocket and finally threw it away. I decided I'd go back to the Army. It's just what my generation did. And I don't regret it."

Dille was sent overseas in November 1944 and assigned to the 66th Black Panther division.

They day before Dille crossed the English Channel, another troop transport ship was attacked by a German submarine lurking amongst the wreckage from D-Day. The vessel sank, claiming the lives of 800 men, including one of Dille's good friends.

"We assumed we were going to the Battle of the Bulge, which was on," said Dille. "But we weren't."

Instead, he ended up in the Southern Brittany region of France, where around 900,000 German soldiers had been bypassed between the cities of Lorient and St. Nazaire. The troops were instructed to keep them there.

"They didn't have any place to go, but they sure had a lot of artillery," Dille said.

The first night they arrived, he and a fellow soldier called "Sad Sack" Johnson were undergoing shelling inside a farmhouse. The explosions grew steadily closer until they realized the next shell could land directly overhead.

"It went into the ditch, and the shrapnel went around us," Dille said.

Luckily, the two men escaped unharmed and received the combat infantryman badge, which was given to soldiers that experienced contact with the enemy. Dille was also awarded a Bronze Star for the event years later when the requirements changed.

Dr. Dille worked for two months as an MP, or military policeman, in Marseilles. The soldiers remained overseas until the war ended in Europe in May of 1945, followed later in the year by the Japanese surrender.

"When the atom bomb was dropped there was great joy," Dille recalled. "It's always affected me. I never thought it was the wrong thing to do because there would've been millions killed otherwise."

Dille was picked by a lieutenant to attend two months of Army university in Biarritz, France. He took classes on ancient history, advanced writing and the history of drama.

"We ate in the hotels," he said. "They had French cooks who could even make powdered eggs taste good."

Afterwards, Dille completed the remainder of his three years of military service in Salzburg, Austria, from October 1945 to March 1946. He returned to the United States on April 12, 1946.

Back in his hometown of Dassel, Dille learned of several new teachers brought on for the school year, including one whose name he recognized from years before. It was Beth Hopeman, who had helped him practice free throws in the high school gymnasium.

"So I went over there and spotted her, and took her out for a date," he said.

The couple married in 1948. At the time, Dille still had one year of college left at the University of Minnesota. He graduated in 1949 with a double major in English and composition, and a minor in French.

He was one of 12 students to graduate with a summa cum laude rank, and was given the English department's annual award for outstanding graduate of the year.

After he graduated, the superintendent of Dassel offered him a position as an English teacher at the high school where his wife, Beth, was already

employed. Despite having no teaching experience, Dille accepted the offer.

"I learned something," he said. "I learned it's a lot of nonsense thinking that if you're a good student you ought to be a teacher. It took me until after Christmas before I figured out what I was doing."

Dille taught high school English for grades 10, 11 and 12, while his wife taught home economics and physical education. He stayed in the position for one year, then returned to the U of M.

Dille worked for one year as a teaching assistant, then four years as an English instructor at the university. He later taught at St. Olaf College for five years and for two years at California Lutheran College. It was in California that he completed his PhD in 1962.

In 1963, while fielding offers from three California colleges, Dille attended a publishing company's cocktail party. By chance he ran into Joe Satton, a faculty member at Moorhead State University who encouraged him to take a teaching position at the school.

"I wanted to get back," Dille said. "I really wanted to get back. And I got hired."

In 1963 he stepped onto the campus of Moorhead State University as an assistant professor of English.

He quickly found that he and President John Neumaier got along well.

"It turned out he and I had all the same views on everything,"

Dille explained.

Dr. Dille worked as an English professor from 1963-66, then became acting dean for two years. John Neumaier left Moorhead State University in 1968, leaving the president's office available.

"I had a friend who I thought would be a very good president," Dille said. "Then somebody came in and said, 'You should know that 85% of the faculty have signed a petition that you become president.'"

Dille became president of Moorhead State University in 1968, at a time when the national culture was splitting over war and politics.

"Moorhead State was full of student activism," Dille recalled. "It was tense but it was really interesting."

Dille recalled that the mood on campus was very divided, especially about the American role in the Vietnam War.

"The ones who were against it were big and loud and really passionate," he said. "Then we had the returned veterans, some of whom were against it and some of whom were not."

One particularly strong protest occurred after the Kent State University shootings on May 4, 1970, where four students were shot and nine wounded by Ohio national guardsmen during a protest against the American invasion of Cambodia.

Between 200-300 Moorhead State University students went on strike and gathered around the

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## MN State Legislator Served As LST Officer

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

than Omaha Beach, because the Germans had been pushed back from shore," Sillers said. "However, the LST 521's crew members saw remnants of American soldiers who had tried to get onto the beach earlier."

Each trip across the channel took about 12 hours. Sillers and the other officers kept the soldiers occupied with exercise and worship services to try to create a sense of normalcy.

Eventually Sillers was promoted to second lieutenant. When the LST 521's executive officer was transferred to another ship, Sillers took his place as the executive officer.

"I became more responsible for the behavior of the crew," he said. "You have to run the ship and keep the men going. And then you had training to do. You had to keep the crew in shape."

Despite the long trips, Sillers didn't experience many problems with the soldiers under his watch. One of the only times was a party that got out of hand while the crew was waiting for a tide so they could sail again.

"Unfortunately, the party got a bit out of control," he said. "We determined that the most appropriate discipline would be to tell everyone involved with the party that they would need to remain on board the ship for a month once we docked again. I took this recommendation to the captain and he agreed with it. I do not remember any parties aboard ship after that."

Every now and then the LST would encounter bombing raids

from enemy planes, including a close call while docked in London. Sillers' LST was never hit, but others were not so fortunate.

One trip in June was rocked by a heavy storm that forced the ship against the docks.

"Rocking against the dock put twenty-two holes in the bottom of the port side," Sillers said. "The ship lost 50,000 gallons of diesel, along with fresh water."

The loss of cargo created a 35-degree list in the vessel, which limped back to England. The LST could only move five knots per hour, but the crew was luckier than that of many other ships that were lost during the storm.

The final two trips of the LST 521 came after the end of the war in Europe.

"We were in England. In Southampton, aboard ship," Sillers said. "We got the notice that the war was over in Europe."

The crew was ordered to sail to Jersey Island, located among the United Kingdom Channel Islands, to transport 1,600 German prisoners of war being held there.

When the LST arrived, Sillers was ordered to inspect the docks and warehouses before the other soldiers disembarked. According to his personal war recollections, Sillers was the first American on Jersey Island after the end of the war in Europe.

The LST 521 made two trips to Jersey Island, carrying 800 prisoners each time.

In total, the vessel made a total of 39 trips across the English Channel.

The ship then returned to New York for a few weeks to prepare

to sail to the Panama Canal. However, history intervened, and the war in the Pacific ended after the Japanese surrender.

Sillers was with his wife and daughter, who were visiting from Minnesota, when he heard the news.

"I saw New York City when the war was over," he said with a laugh. "Well, it was like a madhouse."

Sillers sailed down to St. Petersburg, FL, on the LST 521, where the vessel was left in a large "ship graveyard." He returned to Minnesota not long after.

At first it was strange to be home, but Sillers eventually grew accustomed to civilian clothing and life.

"We were treated with respect pretty well for having been in in the service," he said.

He and another soldier led a parade in Moorhead to celebrate the end of the war.

"They had a celebration on the return, and all the branches had their people there," he said. "We marched down First Avenue."

Around six months after he left the service, Sillers and his wife Margaret moved to her family's farm six miles southeast of Moorhead.

Using what he had learned from a short agriculture course at North Dakota State University, he began farming.

The first year was rough, but Sillers stayed in agriculture for the next 50 years.

"I was very lucky in farming, because I always made some money," he said.

In 1962 Sillers ran for the Minnesota State Legislature and was elected as a representative. He served for 10 years as a representative and eight as a state senator.

Sillers and his wife Margaret raised four children. They are Jean, Douglas Hal, Cynthia and Heather.

Over the years Sillers kept in contact with many of the officers from the LST 521. He was a member of the National LST Association's Minnesota chapter, which helps connect veterans with similar war backgrounds.

In his personal war recollections, Sillers, who died on August 1, 2011 at 96 years old, viewed armed combat as unnecessary in solving problems, and as a needless waste of life.

However, he also noted the impact WWII had on his life.

"I have always felt that my experience in the Navy helped me be a better husband, father, farmer and lawmaker," he said.

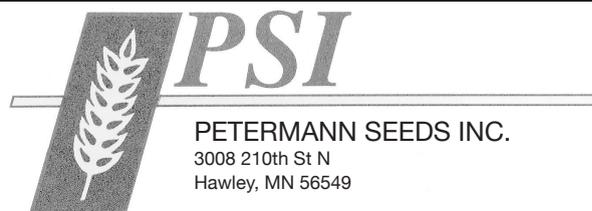


Sillers was executive officer of the LST 521, a transport ship that moved supplies across the English Channel. Weathering storms and bombings, the crew of the ship made a total of 39 trips between England and France during WWII. After the war, Sillers worked in the Minnesota State Legislature, representing Clay County for ten years in the House of Representatives and eight years in the Senate.

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# Serving On The Admiralty Islands In WWII



Hohenstern moved to Moorhead in 1956 to work at the local grain elevator, located near the current site of Chumley's Bar. In 2007 he was on the second Honor Flight to the WWII Memorial in Washington, D.C.

**CONTINUED FROM PAGE 23** washed off the ship," said Hohenstern. "That was three days we were down there."

Hohenstern served as a CB across the Pacific Theater, including New Guinea, the Marshall Islands, Caroline Islands, Philippine Islands, and eventually the Admiralty Islands, located north of New Guinea with a land area of about 800 square miles.

"The Admiralty Islands are just a spot in the water, when you look at a map," Hohenstern said.

The climate was much different than his home state of North Dakota. Temperatures often reached 110 degrees, and jungles covered the land.

"We'd build roads, tear down shrubs and brush in the jungles to build different things," he said. "They had a place where we resupplied the ships. I was a truck driver at that time."

Combat was finished on the islands by the time the soldiers arrived, but they found they weren't alone. The area was occupied by native islanders, who had a camp near the military barracks. However, the two groups got along well.

"They never bothered us," Hohenstern said. "I don't know about the first people that went in there, or what happened to them. You would figure that we're interrupting into their territory, you know? But they never bothered us."

The military operated a water purification plant on the island.

"I had to drive up a road and deliver the food for the guys up

there," he said. "So I drove a Jeep quite a bit."

Hohenstern and his fellow troops slept in quonsets that had been constructed for shelter from the oppressive heat. Any relief from the elements was welcome.

"We had two-high bunk beds," he said. "When it's 110 degrees outside, it's about the same degrees in there. You know how hot steel gets."

Quonsets were also used to store food, including sugar. However, the intense heat affected those buildings as well.

"That quonset was full of sugar sacks," Hohenstern said. "It got so hot that the sugar turned back into liquid. We couldn't get in there because it was so doggone slippery from the sugar melting in the driveway."

The soldiers solved the problem by laying down a trail of 10-pound sacks to build a path for the trucks to drive in and out.

The soldiers also felt the heat during three-hour daily exercises held on sweltering blacktop.

Luckily, they could cool down later in the day with beer cards. Each soldier was given two cards to be redeemed for two beverages.

"We always called that green beer," said Hohenstern. "If you got sick, you turned green as grass."

At one point the soldiers were given the choice to stay on the islands and complete their service, or be flown home the next day. However, they would then have to sign up for another three years with the military.

"Some guys done that," Hohenstern said. "Sometimes, you know, maybe I wish I'd have stayed in there and had 20 years."

However, he decided to finish his time and return to the United States later. Hohenstern completed his service on June 28, 1946. He returned to North Dakota and began looking for work.

One of his first jobs was digging a basement for a farm home. He agreed to do it for no less than \$100. The job turned out to be much more difficult than he expected. Even with a pickaxe, the ground was like cement.

"He paid me \$100, and I wouldn't do it for \$10,000 today," he said. "Oh, that was a job."

Hohenstern met his wife, Jean, at a local dance. The couple moved to Beaver Creek, WI, where he worked at a Monarch Stove factory and Jean worked at Weinberger Shoe Factory.

On a visit home to Mantador, Hohenstern mentioned his desire to work at a grain elevator. Not long after, he received a call in Wisconsin asking if he'd like to work at an elevator in Moorhead.

The Hohensterns relocated to Minnesota, and Edmund worked at the elevator for over 40 years.

"We put in at least 500 to 600 hours a month," he said. "At harvest time we'd work from 6:30 a.m. until midnight. The last 10 years I did that myself. I handled about 300,000 bushels a year."

Hohenstern retired in 1995. He and his wife have lived in the same Moorhead home since 1956. The couple have four children and eleven grandchildren.

In 2007, Hohenstern was part of the second Honor Flight program to the WWII Memorial in Washington D.C. However, it wasn't the only time he and his wife would visit the nation's capital.

"We ourselves went six or eight times already, because we have family that lives out there," he said. "You should take about a

week or two because you read all the history of it."

Edmund and Jean recently celebrated 60 years of marriage, with family members visiting from Charlotte, NC, Washington, D.C. and Minneapolis.

"They had a big deal going on for our 60th wedding anniversary," he said. "That's longer than most. Most people are married about three times by that time."

Hohenstern has a photo album full of black-and-white pictures from his time in the military. The shots serve as a physical reminder of the time he spent serving his country overseas.

"I could've taken a lot more, but you know, it was an old camera," he said. "But I'm lucky I got them, because there's quite a bit of information in there about what I did."



Edmund Hohenstern received a blue "Seabees" flag, featuring the military division's logo, from his son-in-law. He flew the flag until weather damage became too severe and he retired it from outdoor use. It now sits on display along with an American flag at his home in north Moorhead, where he and his wife, Jean, have lived since moving to Clay County in 1956.

## # 87

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## World War II Clay County Homecoming



Scores of Clay County vets donned their uniforms to march in the homecoming parade. Hundreds showed up in civies. Northwest Minnesota History Center.

**By: Mark Peihl**

On April 25, 1942, 170 young men sat down to a hearty breakfast in Moorhead's American Legion Hall. Buses waited outside to take them to Fort Snelling for induction into the US Army. They were the first large group of Clay County draftees sent off for service during World War 2.

During World War I the Moorhead Commercial Club began a custom of sending off groups of inducted local soldiers with a good meal. With the new war, Clay County's American Legion posts, especially Moorhead's Melvin Hearl Post Number 21, carried on the tradition, giving each group of draftees, no matter how small, a

breakfast or luncheon. The Posts hosted over 55 such sendoffs during the course of the war.

On that spring morning, MSUM professor and World War I vet Joseph Kise told the men, "While you are fighting at the front, we back home are going to keep you supplied with the things you need."

And speakers made the men a promise, repeated at each send off, that when they returned, the Legion would hold a big celebration for them. Just over five years later the Legionnaires kept their word.

Sixteen million men and women served in the US military during the war, including nearly 3,000 from Clay County. After VJ

day in August 1945, the services discharged the troops in a rush. By fall tens of thousands of vets a day took buses and trains back to their hometowns. Most had left in large groups, like the 170 Clay County draftees in April 1942. But the military released them individually. Homecomings were private affairs, with the vet often walking home from the local railroad depot and surprising his family at home.

The vets quickly settled down to restart their lives, take jobs, build homes and raise families. It was a busy time.

Home construction basically stopped during the war. Despite a serious materials shortage, over 80 Moorhead families built houses in 1946, over 100 in 1948.

Before the war Clay County averaged about 450 marriages per year. The three-year average for 1946-1948 jumped to a whopping 713 with 726 weddings in 1948 alone - that's still a record.

And these young couples had kids. During the last year of the war, 1945, the county registered 501 resident births. Roughly nine months later the number rose to 641 and to 750 in 1947.

It was a hectic period, but the Legionnaires had not forgotten their promise. Planning for a homecoming party began in January 1947. Representatives from all Clay County Legion posts, business people and others from around the county held meetings in Moorhead and Ulen and drafted plans calling for a Monday, May 19 celebration.

Though the committee Chair, T. J. Bolger, was from Moorhead and the county seat was to host the day, the party was a real county-wide event. Employers across the county gave vets the day off. All businesses outside Moorhead agreed to close at 9:00 a.m. so folks could participate. Moorhead shops closed up in the afternoon.

Scores of Clay County vets donned their uniforms to march in the homecoming parade. May 19 dawned bright and clear. The day's festivities were to begin at 10:00 a.m. with a two-mile long parade, one of the largest in the county's history. Its start was delayed when police reported that "hundreds of cars were converging on Moorhead just before starting time."

Moorhead police and eight State Patrolmen soon had the throngs straightened out and the parade went off at 10:30 a.m. The route ran from Eighth Street west on Main Avenue to Fourth, then north to Center Avenue and back to Eighth Street. The procession

CONTINUED ON PAGE 45

## President's Message

By: Gene Prim  
Historical And Cultural  
Society Of Clay County



Greetings!

This will be my first opportunity to visit with you as president of HCS. It was my privilege to be elected as president of the group in May of this year. The term "privilege" is code for all of the rest of the qualified members could think faster than I could when the presidency opened up. But we will do the best we can for the society.

I have been a member of the board for almost seven years. There has been a tremendous amount of change in that time. I initially signed on with the Clay County Historical Society where, as a newspaper publisher, my primary interests lie. There was a good deal of conversation and even disagreement when the opportunity came to merge the CCHS with the Heritage Hjemkomst Society.

There were skeptics, myself included, who wondered how it would work to merge two dissimilar organizations, one primarily interested in history and artifacts with one that was primarily interested in events and activities. As with most marriages, this one has not been without its trials and challenges. But due entirely to a devoted staff, this merger has gone better than anyone had any right to expect.

To have something as complex as the HCS be born and mature has not happened without leadership. In the earliest days of the society, it could probably have gone either way. The reason it has been successful is the competent guidance given to the organization by our Executive Director Dr. Maureen Kelly Jonason. She has maintained a steady, firm hand on the helm, juggling a multitude of duties that did not even have a job description when she took over.

Through her efforts we have been successful in obtaining a number of grants and converting worthwhile events from money losers into at least a break-even status. Maureen is not the type of executive that sits in an office, thinks deep thoughts and delivers intellectual edicts to the staff. You are as likely to see her in a pair of rubber boots battling a flood as you are in a business suit in front of a TV camera. Although she does each equally well.

Even Maureen's energy level would probably not have been enough to pull the two organizations together harmoniously were it not for the dedicated staff of the Society. Some members she inherited and some she has assembled to make her team work.

Mark Piehl is the veteran on the Society's staff. He recently celebrated his 25th anniversary of employment as the archivist of Clay County. If there is anything you need to know about local history, family lineage, documents or old photos, Mark can probably tell you all about them.

Joining Mark on the HCS team are Collections Manager Lisa Vedaa, Visitors Services Coordinator Markus Krueger, Marketing Coordinator Brianne Carlsrud, Events Coordinator Tim Jorgenson and Gift Shop Manager Kaycee Peterson.

There are a lot of things to see and do at the Hjemkomst Center. If you are a member of HCS you are routinely notified of upcoming events. If you are not a member, the Historical and Cultural Society of Clay County could certainly use your help. We need your financial support in the form of membership and attendance at events. We also need interested people to step up and volunteer their time to make this an even better organization.

We're more than just a Viking ship housed in a building with a weird canvas roof. Stop in and see us. Get acquainted. We think you will like us once we have the chance to get to know each other a little better.



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# German POWs Held In Moorhead During WWII, Worked On Area Vegetable Farms

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12

Magic Aquarium Bar.

Lt. Blair was well liked by the contractors and Mrs. Drury. Horn said "The fellow was all right. He liked a good time rather than pay attention to duty." Blair took the POWs swimming on Sundays to the Buffalo River State Park or the Benedict Gravel Pit southeast of Moorhead.

One of his first acts was to request the city council to close 21st Street to traffic after regular business hours and on Sundays. Hundreds of curious motorists were cruising past the camp. Subjecting prisoners "to the public gaze" was contrary to the Geneva accords. The Fargo Forum reported that "groups of young girls also created something of a problem." The City complied.

A report of an inspection in August 1944 indicated that, though dimly lighted, the warehouse was "cool on hot days. A few things such as a small fish pool... have been made by the men themselves.... Some general reading books will be sent from Algona."

Also sent were arts and crafts materials including paint and brushes, embroidery materials and a wood caning kit. One prisoner caned two decorative wooden plaques for Mrs. Drury which are now in the CCHS collections. Lutheran and Catholic Church services were held on alternating Sundays.



Three POWs paint a barn on the Peterson farm. Bookkeeper Florence Drury later recalled that most of the prisoners were easy to get along with, but remembered these three as, "real Nazi types." Part of Hitler's Afrika Korps, they firmly believed Germany would win the war. *Florence Drury Collection.*

But Blair was not universally admired. Another inspection in September described the compound as "dirty, poorly policed." The report continued "Lt. Blair's management has not been satisfactory to Algona Camp Commander Colonel Lobdell and he is being returned to Algona for compound duty. He has a penchant for addressing civil organizations on prisoner of war matters and is not properly versed in War Department policies to be entrusted to such public appearances."

Indeed, in August Blair had spoken to the Fargo Rotary Club

on "Postwar Germany." His treatment of the POWs belied his feelings about them.

The club newsletter later reported that in a witty but opinionated speech, Blair had characterized his charges as "cocky and arrogant. They are deeply resentful of being penned up with barbed wire for they feel they are the superior race. And so with such deep seated attitudes of mind the whole German population is pretty much of a loss as far as keeping the peace is concerned. In the Lieutenant's opinion there just isn't much salvage value.

Germany will have to be dealt

with very firmly for many years to come."

He was replaced by Lt. B. C. Davis whose first act was to reopen 21st Street to traffic. Davis claimed the restriction had never proved successful and that "henceforth... federal law will be invoked for those who violated non-fraternizing regulations."

He also issued new, clear cut rules to the contractors. They included limiting conversations with the prisoners to work orders, banning POWs from riding in the cabs of trucks or entering businesses and positively barring any exchanging of gifts.

The POWs were returned to Algona after the harvest in November.

In July of 1945, a much smaller group of prisoners returned to Moorhead. The new stricter regulations remained in force. \$1,100 worth of improvements were made to the warehouse including separating the kitchen and dining area from the sleeping quarters. The wire fence was removed.

Roy Schultz, of Adrian, MI, was a Sargent and second in command at Moorhead in 1945. He remembers "The POWs weren't going anywhere. Those guys didn't know where the hell they were." Some prisoners were also allowed to work without guards.

On the 19th of July the Army held a public hearing at the Clay County Courthouse to acquaint the public with the new rules. Some people were more concerned with the guards than the POWs.

In the 1973 interview, Peterson claimed "in 1944 we had more trouble with the guards than with the prisoners.... They were hillbillies...and they were very poorly educated." Horn added "... sometimes they went out with some of the neighbor's girls, and their parents didn't like it very well."

The Moorhead Daily News reported that in 1945 "Guards at the camp will be returning veterans who have relatives or homes in the Minnesota or North Dakota vicinity."

Other citizens were upset when they heard that the prisoners were getting meat several times a week while it was rationed to them. The Geneva Convention required that prisoners receive "the same quality and quantity of meals" as American servicemen.

In 1945, faced with stricter food restrictions at home, the stipulations were reinterpreted to mean the same number of calories - 3,400 per day. Most meat, fat and sugar was removed from the POW's diet and replaced with starches. Ironically, with what we know today about nutrition, this was probably a much healthier diet than what our servicemen received. POWs only received non-restricted meat, including beef shanks, flanks and livers and salt pork, bellies and feet.

The prisoners did their own cooking. Mr. Schultz remembers "we ate the same food as the prisoners. They were very good cooks, too."

CONTINUED TO PAGE 63



A group of POWs shingle a roof while a guard armed with a .45 caliber pistol observes. *Florence Drury Collection.*

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## Local Bombardier Captured In Germany

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

front of a local cafe. One soldier was taken to a German hospital for treatment. The rest were put in jail for two days before taking boxcars to an airman prison camp called Stalag Luft 1.

"They marched us from one depot to the next in the big cities of Bremen and Hamburg," Murphy said. "German civilians kicked and spit at us. We had to use an air raid shelter in Bremen during an attack from American planes."

The prisoners soon arrived at Stalag Luft 1, located north of Berlin by the Baltic Sea. According to Murphy, conditions at the camp were very poor. Thirty men shared one room with a single light bulb and slept on mattresses filled with wooden chips. They were given one Red Cross blanket and allowed no exercise to ward off the cold conditions.

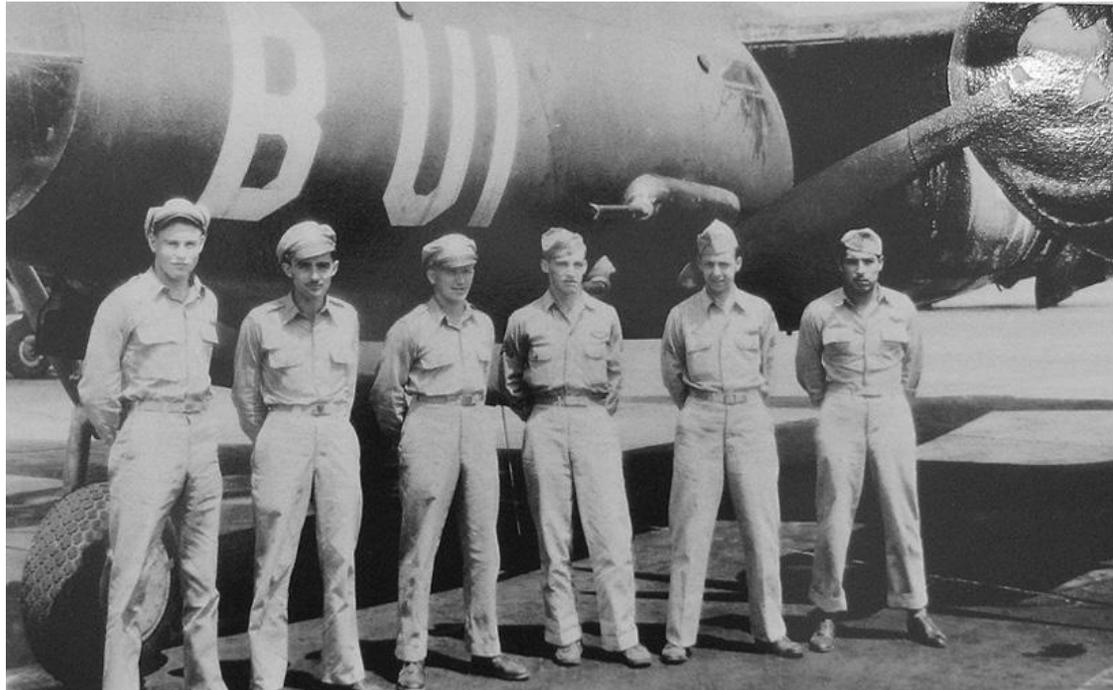
"For the first one or two days we talked about the usual topics—cars, sports and girls," Murphy recalled. "By the second day we forgot about cars. On the 3rd day we forgot about sports. And by the fourth day we stopped talking about girls. All we talked about was food. We were very hungry."

The fate of the B-26 crew was a mystery to the outside world.

"We were not allowed to send mail, so our families only knew we were MIA," Murphy said.

The food at the camp was just as bad as the living conditions. Prisoners were given a single bowl of barley soup and a slice of black German bread a day. Once every two weeks Red Cross parcels were given out containing powdered milk, Spam, a chocolate D-bar and cigarettes.

"I didn't smoke, so I'd get



Murphy, third from left, served as bombardier navigator on B-26 bombers during WWII. He and various crews targeted German military targets including bridges, highways and railways. On Murphy's 54th bombing mission he was shot down over the German village of Barden. His crew survived but was captured by German soldiers.

half a D-bar sometimes for my cigarettes from the others guys," Murphy said.

He and the B-26 crew were held prisoner for a total of eight weeks. "The war was winding down. We didn't know it but the Germans kind of knew it, I think," Murphy said.

One morning the prisoners woke up and found all the guards had disappeared. They had left in anticipation of the oncoming Russian army.

"The Germans made damn sure they got out of there," Murphy said. "They didn't want to surrender to the Russians. They'd rather surrender to the Americans."

The men were left to fend for

themselves as they waited to be rescued. Despite having more freedom, hunger was still an issue. One day Murphy and his fellow prisoners spotted a cottontail rabbit inside the campgrounds and captured it. "That was the first meat we'd had for months," Murphy said. "It was really delicious."

Eventually the Russian army liberated the camp and made plans to move the freed soldiers to the Black Sea to be shipped home. Instead, they ended up waiting for planes to arrive and transport them back to base.

An American major arrived soon after to locate an airport to fly out from. Murphy met him and got the chance to write a message home to let his family know he was alive. The message was scrawled on a piece of paper, folded once, and sent to the address Murphy wrote on the other side.

"No envelope, no glue, nothing, and it got to Felton, MN, in four days!" Murphy said. "Try that with our post office nowadays!"

It took about a week before the planes began to arrive and take them to Camp Lucky Strike, located on the Normandy peninsula of France. Before they were put on the plane the men were deloused with DDT.

"They were still in the clothes that they were shot down in," Ann explained. "When they arrived at Camp Lucky Strike they got clean clothes and clean underwear."

The camp contained about 100,000 men. Murphy remembers

the food lines being so long that after the troops finally ate they would walk a mile to get in line for the next meal. The wait was worth it, though, because to the prisoners the G.I. bread tasted like angel food cake.

The soldiers were given a choice to briefly visit their army base or return directly to the United States. Instead, Murphy was granted special permission to

visit Supreme Allied Headquarters in Paris to discover what happened to his nephew, who was a B-24 pilot.

Because Murphy's father was 31 years older than his mother, his nephew was only one-and-a-half years younger than him. Five months before Murphy parachuted into Germany his nephew had been reported MIA after his own B-24 was shot down.

"They grew up together, and they were childhood playmates all through the years," said Ann.

After hitchhiking to Paris, Murphy learned the bad news. His nephew had been killed when his B-24 had been shot down. He was buried in Flanders Field in Belgium. Murphy made his way to the gravesite, only to find the bodies of the crewmen from the plane had been sent back to the United States.

"They decided the only casualties in Flander's Field were going to be from WWI," Murphy explained.

He returned to Camp Lucky Strike, then took a ship back to the United States.

Murphy graduated from Minnesota State College and worked as a teacher for one year before farming full time. He and his wife Ann were married in 1955. They have five children and eleven grandchildren.

"About 11 years ago I

CONTINUED TO PAGE 67



Murphy's crew was marched to Stalag Luft 1, a German prison camp for airmen, near the Baltic Sea. They were held as prisoners of war for eight weeks until the camp was liberated by the Russian army.

### Septic Service



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# Betts Henry Of The British Royal Air Force

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 20

told her granddaughter. "They thought the sun shown out of his ass. They thought he was great. So that part she got used to."

Betts was stationed in London until, six months pregnant, she was mustered out of the RAF. She had spent three years and nine months in the Women's Army Air Force. Betts went home to Liverpool but when Mont's unit was stationed in Cambridge she moved in with her sister in nearby London.

The baby came during the worst possible time, a German air raid. Her sister Grace took Betts out into the night on a seven mile walk to a nursing home for help.

"It was pitch black, bombers flying overhead and bombs falling all over when I was pregnant and having my labor pains. The air wardens kept calling to us, 'Get in a shelter. You damn fool. You're not supposed to be out walking. There's bombs falling all over.' My sister kept shouting back 'I've gotta get her to the hospital.'"

They made it to the nursing home. Grace was sent home when they arrived.

When the baby was delivered, Betts could tell something was wrong. The midwife would not let her see her baby, but instead went to get a doctor.

The baby, she was told, had spina bifida and would not survive.

The doctor blamed constant German bombing for having an adverse effect on Betts' nervous system during her pregnancy. It may have had something to do with the poor diet the people of England had to live on due to food rationing.



Betts and Lamont Henry at their wedding at the Lowley Road Methodist Church on December 2, 1944 at Liverpool, England. This photo is from the Collection of Jessica Henry

Mont was able to get leave right away to see his wife and baby. The baby survived two weeks in the hospital.

According to the Library of Congress World War II Companion (2007), Betts Henry was one of 70,000 British war brides who followed their husbands to America after the war.

Shortly after Christmas of

1945, Mont had to go home alone to his family's farm near Downer. He waited for his bride, who was again expecting.

Betts Henry's journey across the ocean and half a continent to reunite with her husband was scary, frustrating, and, at times, pretty funny. She tells it best herself in these excerpts from a 1997 interview.

"Mont came back to Minnesota in December and I got my papers but you weren't allowed to travel if you were seven and a half months pregnant. So then I changed my doctor's certificate. I changed it to five and a half months.

"We went to this big camp to get on an American ship to come from England. A lot of the girls were sent back because they were too far along. I guess they must have thought I was tiny because they let me on and the darn ship got a week out, no two days out, and we had to come back for repairs. We got back on it again and away we went. The S. S. Alexandra that was. It took about 10 days.

"Then we were all put on trains. We had all made friends, a lot of the girls... We had big tags on us saying who we were."

Betts missed her stop to Minneapolis and found herself on a train to Iowa. They got her back to Minneapolis but by that time the only train to Downer had already

left.

"I didn't know where I was, all these people turning around in this station and no train to Downer. There was only one train to Downer and I missed it. I didn't know where to turn, who to go to.

"I was running after this little black guy that had taken my suitcases and stuff and he took me to traveler's aid.

"She said, 'Can I help you honey?' I started crying and I said, 'I'm lost! I want to go to Downer!'

"She said, 'Where's Downer?' I said, 'I don't know!'"

As they were talking, the phone rang. It was Mont. He had found out that they lost his wife and was calling the train station to see where Betts was.

"She talked to him and then she put me on the phone.

"He said, 'Hi.' I said, 'I'm cheesed off and I want to go home!' And I was bawling.

"He, of course, was bawling so then he said to put the lady back on the phone and I did. He said, 'Put her on a bus, a Greyhound Bus to Barnesville.' Then he would pick me up in Barnesville when the bus got there.

"I was sitting there crying and she had the bus driver come in and he said, 'I'll look after you honey. Come on. You come with me.'

"And then they put me on this Greyhound Bus. There was only one seat and it was by a big fat lady and this was 12 o'clock at night and I was sitting on the outside and she fell asleep on my shoulder.

"I had bought a fancy hat. I paid a hell of a price for it because, you know, I was so big around so I thought I would wear a fancy

hat. I put the hat up on the shelf and when the guy said, 'Come on honey, this is Barnesville,' and he got me off but I forgot my hat.

"I remember Mont standing there with his mother and they had a raggedy old car and I thought, 'Oh, my God.' It didn't even look like my husband.

"He was in jeans, you know. I thought, 'Oh, no, no' and I said to him, 'I've left my hat on the bus.'

"And then, of course, when we drove it was in March and we drove to Downer and there was dirty snow and nothing around. To little Downer. There were very few houses there, not as many as there are now. I was just devastated. I just wanted to go home."

But she was home, and she learned to like it here. Baby Gerry, the first of the couple's six surviving children, came five weeks later.

Betts and Mont moved from Downer to Moorhead after seven years, when Mont started Henry Brothers Excavating with his brother Ned. Business was good and Mont worked long hours.

Betts spent her time being very involved with her children's activities and a club of other local British war brides. The British Club still meets today, although made up of younger generations.

Betts passed away in Dilworth in 2009.

Her memory, however, is in good hands. Betts' granddaughter, Jessica Henry, has compiled an archive of interviews and artifacts that tell the story of Betts and Mont, which she has shared with the Clay County archives here at HCS.



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## War Meant Sacrifices On The Home Front



Moorhead Mayor Rudy Bergland, left, and Clay County Civil Defense Chair Jake Kiefer look over paperwork in the Moorhead Civil Defense Control Center during a drill in 1942. Forum Photo.

**CONTINUED FROM PAGE 19**  
good prices for steel implements that it then sold at a markup to heavy industry. So the Moorhead city council paid a work crew to dismantle the rails and bridge of the defunct intercity railway and sold Fargo Iron the whole pile. The scrap became weapons and Moorhead used its windfall to reduce its bonded indebtedness by \$69,000.

The war helped the Moorhead Chamber of Commerce when lack of players led it to disband the local F-M Twins minor league baseball team and sell the ballpark land to Minn-Kota Manufacturing.

Fairmont Creamery became the biggest war industry in Clay when the federal government awarded it a handsome contract to produce powdered eggs for the military. Before the first year of war was out, the Creamery was employing two hundred workers, mostly women, to dehydrate 1400 cases of eggs each day (see article elsewhere in this newsletter).

Kost Brothers, a Downer sand, gravel and concrete dealer got contracts to help enlarge Fargo's airport, which in turn helped the Army Transport Command to funnel up to one hundred planes a day through the area, many

of them destined for the Soviet Union under Lend-Lease. This aspect of the airport's business was officially a secret until 1944, but many locals knew something about it.

North Dakota Agricultural College adjusted to the decline in male students by expanding its correspondence class programs in carpentry, motor mechanics, and other occupations "vital to the war effort." It also hosted an Army Specialized Training Program (ASTP) for potential officers. One of these was John Toland, who later wrote best-selling histories of the war. Toland later summarized his three months at NDAC in just two sentences, writing that he went through the training and then went on to "St Petersburg, Florida, where I could finally thaw out from the Arctic winter in Fargo."

Inevitably, there were those who attempted to make money by violating wartime regulations. After working at the draft board and taking a job with the Clay County ration board, Marie Kirkevold witnessed venality at work first hand. More than once, people offered her bribes to grant special favors for tires or gasoline or some other rationed item. When she refused, they often said, "We can go out to a farm and buy all the gas we want."

Part of her job was to visit restaurants, groceries, and general stores in every town, checking prices - and sometimes finding them above the OPA's mandated maximums. Often these were honest mistakes, but the memory



Long-time Moorhead restaurateur Warren Gutaw. Red River Scene Photo Collection.

of a specific grocer who would, "mark the price back up the minute I left," still galled her years later. A few grocers and service station owners were fined for price violations, and the Office of Civilian Defense urged local governments to establish a "consumers' interest committee" to help prevent such abuses.

Now, 70 years later, it is fashionable to refer to the Second World War in rather simple sentences as a time of great national unity, of determination

and service and of victory. All of this was certainly true, but while the conflict was going on, it was also a time of frustration, fear and uncertainty.

No one could say how the war would end, how it would all turn out. Nor could they know what the expansion of Federal power over materials and prices would do to the economy. In this sense, at least, anyone today could learn that we have more in common with the past than we realize.



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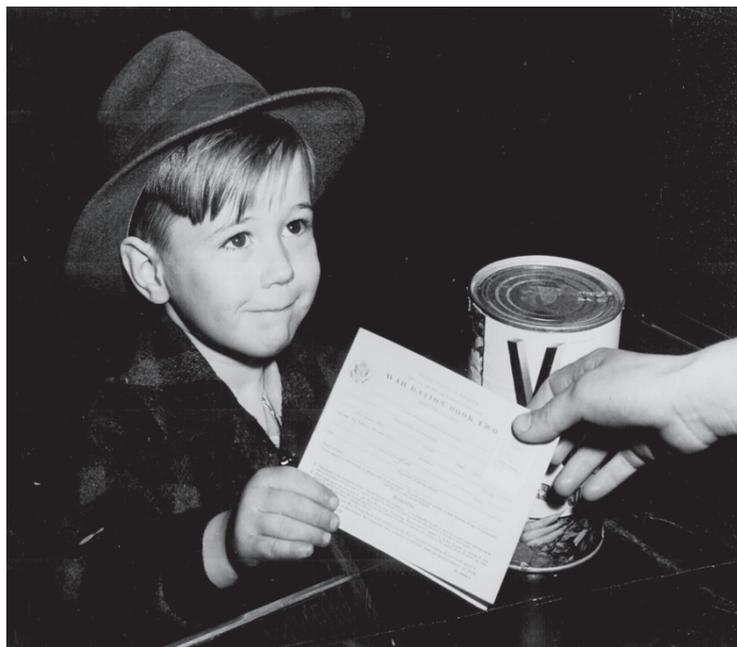
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# WWII Rationing Affects U.S. Home Front



Rationing of food and materials began in the United States in early 1942. The restrictions eventually spread to tires, gasoline, meat, cheese, sugar, canned goods and more. Civilians, like the young American pictured above, used war ration books filled with stamps to purchase rationed goods. *Photo from National Archives.*

**By: Jacob Underlee**

As World War II was fought across the globe, two distinct fronts emerged. One was the daily combat that the soldiers of America were engaging in against the Axis powers. The other was the home front, and the struggles of the wives, parents and children left behind to deal with the effects

of the war.

Precious resources were needed to clothe, arm and feed the soldiers in the fight. In addition to the American servicemen, the United States became known to some as the "Granary of Democracy" because of its ability to feed itself and its war allies.

However, the needs of the war

meant a drain on the country's resources. Americans were forced to accept government interference in what they ate, wore and did for leisure. The United States was encouraged to make do with less, and to save whatever they could to be given to the war effort.

The first changes began in January of 1942, when rubber tires were rationed to prevent a shortage caused by Japan's capture of Malaya and the Dutch East Indies, the United States' main supplier of natural rubber.

Rationing decisions were made on the federal level by the Office of Price Administration (OPA), and enforced at the local level by volunteer rationing boards. In total, the OPA managed 5,500 rationing boards across the country.

In Clay County, the OPA's Moorhead office was first located at the National Loan and Improvement Building at 602 Center Avenue. It later moved to the Armory, located on the corner of Second Avenue and Fifth Street.

The restrictions switched to food in April 1942, when it was announced that sugar would be rationed. In May, civilians were given War Ration Book one, which contained stamps redeemable for one pound of sugar every two weeks.

Citizens visited local schools to receive the first ration book. They were asked to register how

much sugar they already had in their homes, with any excessive amounts then deducted from the ration book to even out the supply.

While War Ration Book 1 was meant only for sugar, it was eventually also used for coffee and shoes.

War Ration Book 2 was distributed in early 1943. To receive the new book civilians had to present Ration Book 1.

The book contained 48 blue stamps and 64 red stamps, which each civilian could use per month. The blue stamps were to be used for canned goods and processed foods, while the red stamps were for meat, dairy products, fish and canned fish and milk.

Meat was added to the ration list in March 1943, along with cheese, canned vegetables and canned fruit.

To stop any hoarding, the stamps, or points, in the ration book could only be used at certain times.

Values for the stamps varied depending on the availability of a food product. It was possible for an item to rise from a cost of 10

to 25 points, or to drop an equal amount, depending on what the item was.

Because of this, many people found the process overly confusing. To help, the OPA placed "informational columns" in newspapers to try and simplify the process. It also suggested the most effective ways to use the ration points by releasing charts and instruction booklets to the public.

In 1942 the OPA froze food prices to prevent inflation of costs. They required that stores posted the point value of each food item, along with its price.

Coffee was rationed from November 1942 to July 1943, because the ships that moved the beans from South America to the United States had been appropriated for use in the war.

War Ration Book 3 was mailed in July 1943, followed by War Ration Book 4 in October. 9,058 copies were handed out in Moorhead that month.

To help make change for the red and blue stamps, tokens

**CONTINUED TO PAGE 44**

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Movie star Rita Hayworth promotes the donation of scrap metal towards the war effort. Several actresses and entertainers helped promote wartime causes at home and abroad during the war. Excess metals, tin, waste paper, cooking fat and silk stockings were among the everyday items recycled for use in WWII. *Photo from National Archives.*



## Silver Star Recipient Spent Life On Farm

**By: Jacob Underlee**

Aubrey Thomas was born on the farm, raised on the farm and returned to the farm after serving for three years and six days in World War II.

Thomas was the oldest of five children growing up on his family's land near Kragnes, MN. He graduated from Moorhead High School in 1940.

Two years later, he was drafted into the United States Army and received basic training at Fort Knox, Kentucky.

After completing aptitude tests, a white patch was sewn into his uniform to identify him as a potential future officer.

"I was in the armored force," he said. "That's mostly tanks and stuff. I did everything."

After basic training, Thomas was talked into staying on board as cadre, where he instructed the new recruits on weapons training and could possibly continue to officers' school. He agreed to remain at Fort Knox for another 13 weeks.

As the second group of recruits was finishing basic, Thomas still hadn't been chosen. He decided against officers' school and went to his company commander.

"I said I wanted out," he said. "I would do anything to get out of there."

Not long afterward, Thomas was boarding the Mariposa troop transport from Norfolk, VA, and heading overseas. He was assigned to the galley, where he and another soldier peeled potatoes for the thousands of people on board. Six days later he landed in Casablanca, Morocco.

"It was my first visit to a foreign country," Thomas explained. "To see camels and mules walking quietly down the streets was a new experience for me."

The soldiers loaded onto a train and traveled northeast to Bizerte, Tunisia. Thomas was assigned to the 6638th Engineer Armored Mine Clearing Company as a replacement.

"We had four platoons of tanks," he said. "Some of them had log chain flails to beat on the mines and set them off. Some tanks had dozer blades to clear roads and fill tank traps. There was also a platoon of infantry to probe for mines by hand."

Thomas had been assigned a tank commander's rating after training at Fort Knox, which gave him a tank and a crew at his command. However, he never cared for the large vehicles.

"They were noisy and cold when the weather was cold, and very warm when it was hot out,"



Kragnes native Aubrey Thomas served three years in the Army during WWII in Morocco, Tunisia, Italy, France, Germany and England. He received the Silver Star for his efforts in clearing a blocked railway tunnel of explosives.

he said.

Luckily, Thomas found a new position. One day a sergeant entered his tent and asked if he could weld. Thomas had taken a night course in welding at Fargo High School and was quite experienced. He burned a couple beads for the sergeant at the camp's shop area, and was officially given the title of company welder. "I was delighted to get out of that tank," Thomas recalled. "There was an awful lot of welding to do. We were making a lot of our own things to clear mines."

Thomas soon Africa in a ship convoy and landed near Salerno, Italy.

"I heard my first bombing the night we lay out in the harbor waiting to land," he said. "We were kept down in the ship's hold so we couldn't see all the excitement. We got off without mishap."

By this time, Thomas had been reassigned from welder to Jeep driver. A few professional welders had joined the company, so Thomas asked for the driver position rather than return to a

tank.

He was eventually assigned to work for Lieutenant Reed Bethers, who was impressed with how Thomas operated the vehicle when he gave the officer a ride. In fact, Thomas had been operating vehicles since he was eleven years old, so it came easily for him.

"Having a vehicle assigned to you is a pretty good break," Thomas said. "You don't catch KP or walk guard, but it does involve a lot of driving."

The soldiers were continuing to fight at Salerno, but had reached strong resistance north of Santa Maria.

The Anzio beachhead invasion began around the same time, and Thomas' company was expected to send a unit to help. Lt. Bethers asked if he was willing to volunteer.

"I said I'm not volunteering but I'll go," Thomas explained. "He said pack your bags. I said okay."

When the unit arrived, the beachhead assault had been going on for about a week. They landed safely and immediately began

creating a dugout for shelter from enemy shelling.

The finished product measured 6x8x5 feet, covered by wooden planks, sandbags and dirt. The unit's dugouts were spaced about 50 yards apart.

Thomas followed plans from an Army newspaper and built a homemade radio from flashlight battery carbons, a razor blade, earphones and antenna. By moving the razor blade up and down, the soldiers could tune in to Radio Rome and Armed Forces Radio stations. Soon the other members of the unit built their own radios.

"We could get Axis Sally, who was a German radio disc jockey who was supposed to make us feel bad by telling us we were their best prisoners," Thomas said. "But she played good American records that we enjoyed."

One day Thomas was lying on his bunk and heard voices that weren't from a radio station. He stopped at another dugout and told the soldiers, who were playing cards, to speak into their earphones.

"I ran back to my dugout and, lo and behold, we had our own telephone line," he said.

To pass the time at the beachhead the soldiers also created a small movie theater by digging a trench and covering it with canvas.

"We didn't think we'd be there long, but it was from January to May," Thomas said.

He and Lt. Bethers briefly traveled to Naples to pick up parts and mail. Soldiers there were preparing for the invasion of southern France with daily marching, calisthenics and classes.

"We were glad to get back to Anzio, even if we did get shelled every day," Thomas said. "But I was beginning to wonder if we were ever going to get off the beachhead."

Eventually the unit made contact with the southern front, and the soldiers took Rome in early June.

"The Normandy landing was about the same time so they took away our big headlines," Thomas said. "We didn't mind though, for it meant the war should be over soon."

The troops began training to aid in the invasion of southern France. After landing on the beach they moved north into the country towards Epinal.

Only a couple tank platoons and the maintenance crew arrived first. Thomas was sent back to Marseilles to bring up the rest of the group. He made a total of three trips to and from the front.

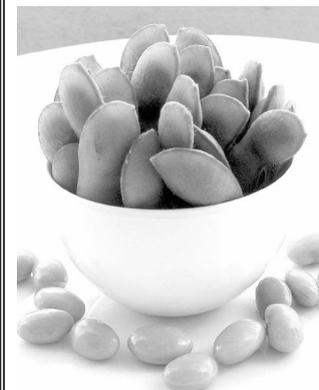
"I was pretty busy from then on," he said. "I made trips to the front with officers to look at projects for which we had to use our tanks. We mostly cleared roadblocks that the Germans had left for us. Our men that cleared mines by hand were busy."

On December 5, 1944, Thomas and Lt. Bethers traveled to the front to inspect a roadblock of felled trees across the highway. They had left a dozer tank behind, so Thomas drove back alone to retrieve it.

"On the way back there was a terrific explosion right in front of me," Thomas said. "My head felt

CONTINUED ON PAGE 64

## Clay - Wilkin Soybean And Corn Growers Association





# MN Native Recalls Time As Engineer

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 25

ammonia on his crops.

"I studied up on that stuff and went to a couple meetings in St. Paul," he said.

In 1964 Boen moved the family to Battle Lake and managed the Cenex Farm Supply Co-op for 13 years. He switched gears again and opened a Dairy Queen franchise in Pelican Rapids in 1977. He owned the restaurant until his retirement in 1999 at age 72.

In 1986 Boen married his second wife, Mildred, a Clay County native. In 2005 the couple moved into their current home in Mildred's hometown of Barnesville.

The Boens stay busy with a large extended family.

"Between the two of us we've got 29 grandchildren," Cal said. "Millie's got four and I've got 25."



Cal Boen was drafted into the military in January 1945. His farm background got him a spot in the mounted cavalry horse platoon that served in Berlin in the aftermath of WWII.

In 2007 Boen participated in the Honor Flight program that brought local veterans to the new WWII Memorial in Washington D.C.

He made the trip with fellow Clay County veterans Virgil Tableman and Arvid Thompson. The group saw Arlington National

Cemetery, the Lincoln Memorial, Washington Monument and the changing of the guard ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknowns.

The group was met by Colin Powell, former secretary of state and chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who took time to meet

with the veterans.

"It's just like in the service," Boen said with a smile of the eager crowd swarming Powell, "Everyone wants to be first in line for chow time."

Still, Boen is happy he went along for the ride. "That was an exciting trip," he said.



Veterans Cal Boen, Virgil Tableman and Arvid Peterson visited the new World War II Memorial in Washington D.C. as part of the 2007 Honor Flight program from Fargo.



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## WWII In The Media: Front Line Reporting

By: Jacob Underlee

The effects of World War II spread throughout daily life for all Americans, even seeping into the entertainment industry. Theaters played newsreels between films, broadcasters reported on the latest developments overseas, and Hollywood's stars signed up for duty.

One of the earliest voices covering the European conflict was Alexander Dreier, a broadcaster who went to work for the United Press in Europe.

He arrived in Berlin in 1939 and worked as a correspondent, eventually attracting interest from the Gestapo. He was removed from the country by order of the Nazi party in 1941 and transferred to London, where he worked for the BBC.

The lead-up to WWII was also reported by H.V. Kaltenborn, who spent much of the 1930s covering the changing situation in Europe. He interviewed both Hitler and Mussolini, and was among the first regularly scheduled radio commentators.

Kaltenborn spoke from his personal notes or from nothing at all. He never used a script, yet was able to keep his listeners informed on all the important issues.



Bob Hope performed for hundreds of crowds during his career with the USO. At it's peak in WWII, the organization was providing around 700 shows per day around the world.

This was especially true when he covered the Munich Pact crisis, where a portion of Czechoslovakia was given to Germany to appease Hitler's demands and prevent war, with the approval of France, the United Kingdom and Italy.

Kaltenborn translated the speeches of Hitler and Mussolini, and warned that they were a sign of things to come. Hitler may be satisfied for now, he explained, but

he would always want more.

He was proven right as Germany continued its quest for domination and the United States became involved in the war.

Arguably the most famous broadcaster of WWII, or any time period, was Edward R. Murrow.

Working for CBS, Murrow arrived in London in 1937 and began to collect a group of reporters including Charles Collingwood, William Shirer, Bill Schael and Howard K. Smith to cover the forces that would eventually lead to the second World War

Murrow was known to report from the front lines of the war, whether during the London bombings, concentration camps or in the air during bombing missions.

His reputation, forged during the war, eventually led to him becoming one of the most famous newsmen of all time.

The toll of World War II was shown in words by news writers and in pictures by photographers.

Many of the images from the conflict have since become iconic, like Joe Rosenthal's snapshots of the raising of the American flag on Iwo Jima.

Robert Capa's photos from the D-Day invasion of Normandy, as well as Eddie Worth's pictures of the London bombings and Nazi trials were just two of many photographers that captured the effects of the conflict for years to come.

On the home front, when Americans weren't busy following the war via news updates or President Roosevelt's Fireside Chats, they were turning to the radio for entertainment.

Programs like Gene Autry,

Jack Benny, Charlie McCarthy and Edgar Bergen, Red Skelton, Fibber McGee and Molly, The Bob Hope Show and Walter Winchell Commentary provided temporary relief from the often stressful war news.

Far away from home, soldiers on the front lines often turned to military radio and newspapers for information. There were other options as well, including programs broadcast from enemy countries. These radio shows played American music and were hosted by disc jockeys that often mocked or teased the troops about their cause.

One of the most well-known hosts was Mildred Gillars, renamed 'Axis Sally' by American

troops who listened to her radio show.

Born in Maine in 1900, Gillars hosted the daily 'Home Sweet Home' radio program from Germany during WWII. It was broadcast to Europe, the United States, the Mediterranean and North Africa.

She also performed in the radio play 'Vision of Invasion,' portraying an American mother mourning the loss of her son. The program was intended to dishearten troops preparing for the invasion of Normandy.

She was arrested after the war and put on trial for treason in 1949. Despite the defense's claim that she was under the influence

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 56**



Mildred Gillars and Iva Toguri D'Aquino, known as Axis Sally and Tokyo Rose, respectively, were radio hosts for Axis powers Germany and Japan during WWII. They were charged with treason after the war and both spent time in prison.



Betty Grable was a featured attraction at USO shows. As a symbol to American GIs of the girls they left behind, her face and form graced the nosecone of many Allied bombers and lockers during the war.



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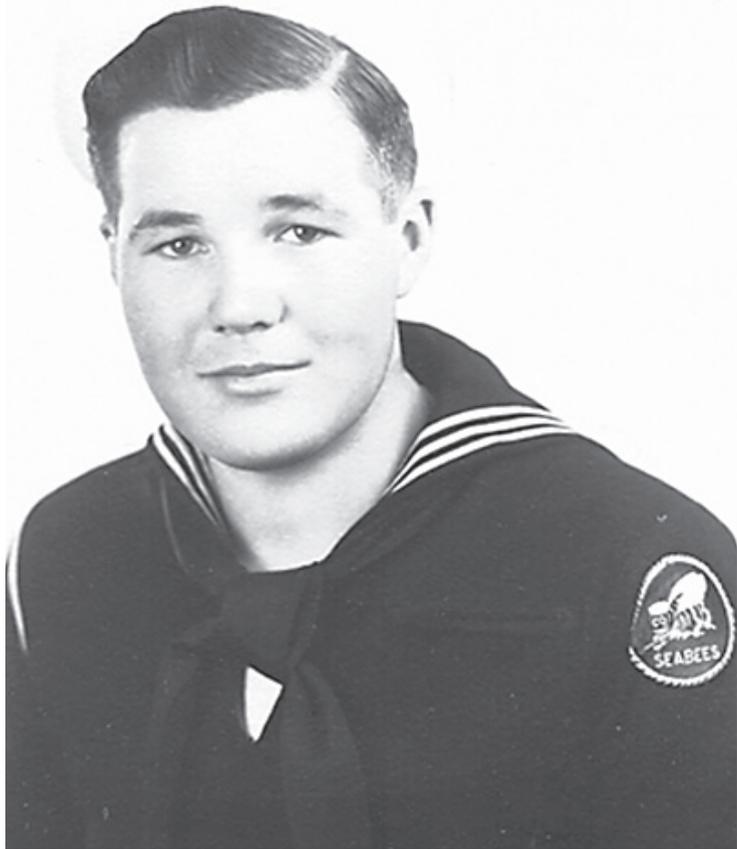
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# County Native Fought In Pacific Theater



Arvid Thompson poses for a picture in his Navy uniform shortly after completing his Seabees training.

**By: Jacob Underlee**

In June of 1995 Arvid Thompson stood on the beach of a Pacific island he could barely recognize, although he'd been there before as a young man. Fifty years had passed since he served in World War II as a member of the United States Navy. Okinawa, Japan, was now a very different place.

Arvid Thompson's story began thousands of miles away. The Barnesville native was born July 28, 1927, on the family farm seven miles east of town. Growing up, Thompson helped his father with the day-to-day operation of the farm.

The dry, dusty 1930s brought struggles to farm life, but Thompson's family got by with a combination of livestock, chickens and pigs. At the time the illumination of electricity still hadn't stretched outside of town.

"No yard lights," Thompson said. "When it got dark at night it was dark out there, boy."

Farm work included using horse power to pull implements to work the dry earth. In 1941 Arvid's father bought the family's first tractor, a John Deere Model B complete with starter and lights.

"We thought we were in hog's heaven," Thompson said of his first impression of the new

technology.

Thompson attended a country school from the age of five until he transferred to Barnesville High in eighth grade. He graduated in 1944 at age 16.

World War II had already been raging for years and many people, including a few of Thompson's cousins, had joined the military.

"Nearly everybody went unless they had some special deferment or health problem," Thompson said.

In the 1940s the local Bijou Theatre showed two movies a night and a matinee on Sunday.

"It cost a whole dime to go to the show," said Thompson, who was a frequent moviegoer.

The feature films were often accompanied by a comedy short and a newsreel with updates about the war. Thompson heard the call for young men to join the fight.

"Maybe I got carried away by going to the movies," Thompson said. "Seeing 'Join the Navy, See the world'."

At the time, the military required all soldiers to be at least 17 years old.

"There were a few that lied their age that got in at 15 or 16," Thompson said.

He managed to wait, but just barely. On his 17th birthday Thompson visited a recruiter's

office in Fargo and joined the Navy.

In August 1944 he left for three months of boot camp at Camp Farragut, Idaho. During training he was assigned to be a member of the Construction Battalion, often shortened to C.B.

"It's like the Army engineers, but this is the Navy," he explained, displaying the patch on his uniform depicting a yellow-and-black bumblebee buzzing through the air armed with a gun, hammer and wrench.

The role of the Construction Battalion, nicknamed Seabees to match its insect mascot, was to assist the soldiers in battle by maintaining equipment, buildings and more.

After a brief Christmas furlough, Thompson took a steam train to Port Hueneme base in Oxnard, CA, where he received further training in the desert near Twentynine Palms.

A few months later he would

put that training to use.

"They told us we were going to a place called Okinawa, which none of us had ever heard about before," Thompson said.

The Allied forces were focused on securing the Pacific islands before invading Japan. The military was creating a massive convoy of ships to take Okinawa, the largest of the Ryuku Archipelago Islands, which was expected to be a key battlefield.

Thompson made the journey on a converted Liberty troop ship, one of roughly 1,300 vessels that crossed the ocean towards Japan. Because the fastest ships had to wait for the slowest, the fleet of oil tankers, freighters, troop ships and transports took 31 days to reach its destination.

Soldiers played poker and blackjack to entertain themselves between duties on the journey.

"There was no money changing hands because nobody had any money," Thompson said. "Nobody

paid and nobody collected."

When the fleet landed on April 1, 1945, it didn't find the fight it had expected. The Japanese army had changed its strategy and moved south rather than attacking the landing vessels head-on as in the past.

"The Marines and Army went in first," Thompson said. "I remember we had to stay on the ship for awhile before we could go ashore."

Eventually he and the other Seabees began moving the heavy machinery from the ships onto landing crafts and then to shore.

"The fighting got real serious after awhile," Thompson said.

He and his fellow Seabees were eventually assigned to maintain Yonabaru Air Base, an area of the island the Navy used as an air strip to launch planes. When a Japanese attack was imminent Thompson would help ensure the planes were running properly and the runway

**CONTINUED TO PAGE 50**



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## Chef Dishes Up Memories of World War II



Gerald "Jerry" Palmer, originally of Tomah, WI, served as a sergeant in WWII, working as a cook in Iceland.

**By: Jacob Underlee**

Jerry Palmer dished up food for customers at his parent's A&W restaurant, and later for fellow soldiers in Iceland during WWII.

Gerald (Jerry) Palmer was born September 9, 1920, in rural Wisconsin.

He lived on the family farm until he was 16, when his parents moved into nearby Tomah and started an A&W restaurant.

Palmer helped out during his teen years.

"At the time it was mainly root beer and maybe hot dogs," he said.

The store was open five months a year during the warm summer season.

In October 1942 Palmer was drafted into the Army. He was given two weeks to prepare but decided to head for duty right away.

He remembers getting his physical in Milwaukee.

"They count your fingers to see if you've got a trigger finger or not," he said with a laugh.

He received basic training at

Camp Campbell, KY. While he was there the request for military cooks went out.

"I volunteered and didn't hear anything," Palmer said. "A couple weeks later they asked again and I volunteered again and they took me."

For about two months Palmer's days consisted of cooking school in the morning and food preparation in the afternoon.

"We had roasts, stews, eggs, pancakes, everything," Palmer remembered. "We ate very good."

The 959th Air Base Security Battalion was eventually scheduled to go overseas. However, a delay caused a six-week layover in Boston.

The Army had already taken away the soldiers' winter gear, leaving them only dress clothes and combat fatigues as wardrobe in the middle of July.

"Whenever we went to town we had to wear our wool uniforms," Palmer said.

When the group finally left America they were unsure of their

destination.

Palmer remembers a captain assuming they were only stopping at Iceland before continuing on to England.

The soldiers traveled across the ocean on the Mariposa, a former luxury liner that was repurposed as a troop transport during the war.

The trip took eight days because the vessel was constantly zigzagging across the water to avoid enemy submarines.

The troops alternated sleeping quarters. One night would be spent at water level on F deck. The next day the soldiers would move upstairs to the ship's deck for a night and then back down again.

Palmer remembers having two meals a day while on board. Each soldier received a colored ticket that determined what time of day he could eat.

The troops landed and stayed at Reykjavik, Iceland's capital city, for about three months before relocating to nearby Keflavik.

Palmer and the rest of the 959th Air Base Security Battalion were tasked with guarding Meeks Field, an important air base en route to England.

"Small airplanes couldn't get all the way to England," Palmer said. "So they landed in Iceland to refuel."

Adjusting to the Icelandic climate was easy for the Wisconsin native.

"It was like Minnesota,"

Palmer said of the weather.

The interior of the country was mostly glacial but towns had popped up along the coast.

Palmer worked under a mess sergeant who organized the cooks into shifts.

He would go to work at 11:00 a.m. and serve lunch, cook and serve supper and then prepare food for the next day.

The next morning he would wake around 5:00 a.m. and serve breakfast, then prepare and serve lunch.

"Then you'd be off until the next day at 11:00 a.m.," he explained.

Palmer and the rest of the cooks belonged to the Headquarters group, which shared the same mess hall as the A and B companies working with them in Iceland.

"We were kinda an unusual outfit," Palmer said of his fellow cooks.

The group formed during training in the United States.

"Then we got a bunch of Southern boys," Palmer said. "That group formed the 959th Air Base Security Battalion and we stayed together all during the war."

Palmer remembers when the mess sergeant got permission from an officer for the cooks to take a three-day camping trip on the southern end of Iceland.

Palmer brought his camera and took several pictures that he now

keeps in a large photo album of his wartime experiences.

Palmer returned home on furlough after 19 months in Iceland. By the time his break was done the war was nearly over.

He remained in America and was discharged just before Thanksgiving of 1945, after three years and twenty-six days in the military.

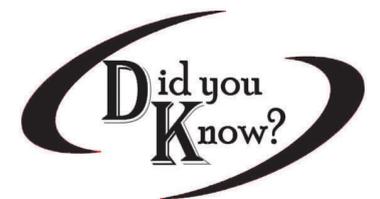
Palmer bought in to A&W after his parent's partner left the business. He operated a restaurant in Sioux Falls, SD.

"I put 50 years into A&W," Palmer said.

During his career he saw the food service change from a summer business into a year-round restaurant with a full menu.

"Now it's like McDonald's," he

**CONTINUED TO PAGE 66**



Canuto and Andrea Cruz are thought to be the first Mexican-Americans to become permanent residents of Clay County.

They came to the Red River Valley in the 1920s as migrant workers in the newly developing sugar beet industry.



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# WWII Rationing Affects U.S. Home Front

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 38

were introduced for smaller denominations. Ten red tokens equaled the value of one red stamp.

Meat and canned goods were briefly removed from the ration list in the summer of 1944. It didn't last, however, as shortages developed and the products were once again put on the list in 1945.

Fresh fruits and vegetables were never placed on the ration list. However, any depletion was made up for by the Victory Gardens program, which encouraged Americans across the country to plant and raise their own products.

Ranging from hundreds of acres to a simple plot in a backyard, there were an estimated 20 million gardens taking part across America during WWII. For a time, the program produced around 40% of the country's vegetable crop.

According to Dave Kenney in "Minnesota Goes to War: The Home Front During WWII," participation among Minnesotans in the Victory Garden program was almost 100% among farms and rural villages. Even in the big cities, nearly 33% of civilians were growing their own fruits and vegetables.

Gasoline was also rationed during WWII, starting in December 1942. The national highway speed limit was lowered to 35 mph, and all pleasure driving was banned in January 1943.

Civilian vehicles were given

different designations that determined how much gas they could use per week. These stickers were then placed on the vehicle's windshield.

An "A" was for non-essential driving, which included most of the population. Drivers with the "A" designation could use four gallons per week, which was later lowered to three gallons.

The "B" designation was for commuters, including workers involved in the war effort. They were allowed to pump up to 10 gallons a week, depending on the distance to their job.

The coveted "C" rating was for essential personnel, including doctors, police, clergy and postal workers, who were given greater leeway in gasoline usage.

Rationing lowered civilian gasoline use by 28%, which allowed an increase in production between 1941 to 1945 that was put to use in the war.

Citizens became accustomed to the idea of more frequent walking, as well as carpooling to save gasoline for the soldiers overseas.

Although the process of rationing was recognized as beneficial to the war effort, it was still an unpopular program with some people.

Citizens often found ways to flout the OPA's restrictions, such as failing to report how much of a product they really had. Others turned to a growing black market that often sold goods for double



Civilians line up for a new shipment of sugar after the start of rationing. Products often changed in price, or point value, depending on their availability. *Photo from National Archives.*

the price the government posted.

Counterfeit stamps were also produced. Efforts by the OPA to fight the use of fake ration stamps failed when the specially made, chemically treated paper the new ration stamps were printed on were stolen by counterfeiters.

For the most part, however, rationing was a success. According to "The Home Front: USA", prices only rose 9% between 1942 and 1945.

World War II required an entire generation to "Use it up, wear it out, make it do, or do without," to

use a common catchphrase of the time.

Even items that weren't rationed were scarce. United States citizens had trouble finding common products like alarm clocks, lawn mowers, candy, beer mugs, glass eyes, ice skates, lobster forks, bicycles, typewriters and liquor.

Everyday beauty products like nylons and silk stockings were also hard to come by, and were replaced by liquid leg makeup.

Just as they were asked to do without, the public was also encouraged to do more with what they already had. Rather than throw things away, many items considered trash were saved and donated to scrap drives across the country.

Tin foil from cigarette and gum wrappers, along with tin from canned goods, was donated and used in soldier's food containers. Old cannons, bells and other scrap metals were recycled into weaponry.

In "The Home Front: USA", Ronald H. Bailey explained that, by the war's end, most of the steel and half of the tin for American weapons production was coming from scrap drives.

Waste paper was used in military supply packaging, while the silk from women's stockings was used in gunpowder bags.

Natural plants like milkweed pods and cattail fluff were collected and used in Navy life jackets. Even kitchen grease was saved and donated for use in explosives.

Despite the sacrifices brought on by rationing, WWII also brought the country together. The act of contributing to the war effort helped many Americans feel more connected to each other and the conflict overseas.

The situation on the home front, with the unusual amount of government intervention in daily life, was largely tolerated because of the belief that it was worth it to help the soldiers win the war.

#### SOURCES:

"The Home Front: U.S.A.", by Ronald H. Bailey

"Minnesota Goes To War: The Home Front During World War II", by Dave Kenney

"The Oxford Companion To WWII", by I.C.B. Dear, M.R.D. Foot

"A War To Be Won: Fighting The Second World War", by Williamson Murray, Allan R. Millett

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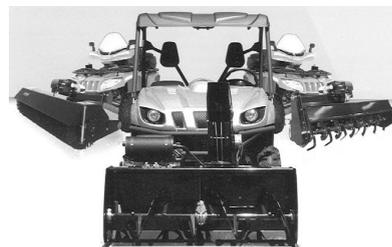
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## World War II Clay County Homecoming

### CONTINUED FROM PAGE 33

featured floats, 11 bands and 24 cars carrying "Gold Star" families - parents and wives of World War I and II soldiers who had died in service.

The Planning Committee urged vets to show up in uniform. Scores did and marched in formation through the streets. Hundreds more wore civilian clothes.

Moorhead Daily News reporter and recently returned Navy veteran Brice Worthington quipped that "Many others appeared in mufti, wearing little pins that identified them as ex-GI's who either still were too tired of their military attire to go back to it once more or were offering mute evidence that the waistline already had expanded to a uniform-breaking point."

Newspapers estimated that between 10,000 and 20,000 spectators lined the streets of Moorhead. Over 2,000 veterans signed in at a registration tent.

During the war locals erected a long Honor Roll near the Moorhead City Hall listing the names of Clay County residents who had gone to service. As men and women shipped out, their names were added. On May 19, it listed 2,940 service people.

At 11:30 a.m., the Honor Roll was the scene of a unique "veiling" ceremony. Moorhead

Mayor R. B. Bergland told the assembled veterans while they were away, "Ours was a period of waiting with aching and anxious hearts for your safety and welfare, and for your return, we rejoice and welcome you on this day, to your loved ones, your home and that you may now again take up your life in a world again at peace from open warfare... We face the future today with the determination that there shall be no more honor rolls erected and that this world shall have everlasting peace."

The Moorhead Daily News quoted Master of Ceremonies and World War I vet George Comstock as saying "the Clay County Honor Roll was born 'to keep your names before us' during the time of sacrifice in service. The temporary Honor Roll has served its purpose now."

As an American Legion honor guard fired seven salutes, four returning service men and women draped a canvas over the Honor Roll, its place to be taken by a permanent monument listing all of the approximately 70 Clay County men who died in service during World War II. Sadly, this project has never been finished. Also, unfortunately, the temporary Honor Roll was not kept and its list of names is missing. A benediction and the singing of "God Bless America" followed.



These four returning veterans "veiled" the Clay County Honor Roll with a canvas drape shortly after this photo was taken. They are, left to right, former Army PFC Robert Bredemeier of Barnesville; former WAVE Lois Howard of Moorhead; former WAC Mina Qualley of Comstock and former Navy cook, George Kunz of Barnesville. Northwest Minnesota History Center photo.

At noon 2,200 veterans and family members received a free lunch at the American Legion Hall. Meanwhile, the Moorhead Legion Auxiliary served lunch to 135 Gold Star family members at the Moorhead Country Club.

The day's main program began at 3:00 p.m. at the Moorhead Armory where a huge crowd heard speeches and musical tributes to the veterans. Popular NBC radio commentator Alex Dreier gave a somber speech focusing on the

twin threats of Communism and the potential for another, much more devastating war.

Dreier opened with the comments that nations must sacrifice some of their sovereignty in favor of a "world government." He concluded "if we don't have a world government we have no alternative but to be reduced to nuclear dust."

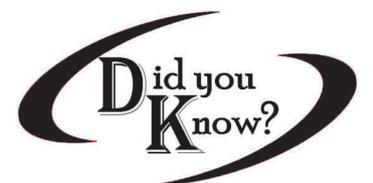
Musical selections from the American Legion Ninth District Band and the MSTC Veterans Chorus followed. The afternoon program ended with a moving memorial to the County's war dead and a stirring rendition of "The Holy City" by the Ulen Bethlehem Lutheran Choir. Two baseball games and twin free

dances at the Moorhead Legion Hall and Armory finished the day's activities.

Newspapers quoted many vets expressing their appreciation for the day. Many other people commented on the homecoming's impressive organization and efficiency.

The next day, Dreier devoted his 7:00 a.m. national broadcast to praising Clay County folks for their cooperation and good humor. He said, "It was the most efficiently organized day's celebration that this reporter has ever witnessed. Everything was precision oiled and timed... and the women, God bless them, were there, too."

The women's Auxiliary of the American Legion served some 2,200 GIs their noonday meal in less than an hour's time. About 25 women handled that assignment. Who else could have done the job?... thanks to the people of Clay County for providing such a clear picture of what makes America tick. Moorhead, Minnesota, you've got what it takes. Alex Dreier, reporting."



On July 6, 1936, the US Weather Bureau recorded a high temperature of 114 degrees in Moorhead - that's still the highest temperature ever recorded in Minnesota. Uff da, that's hot!

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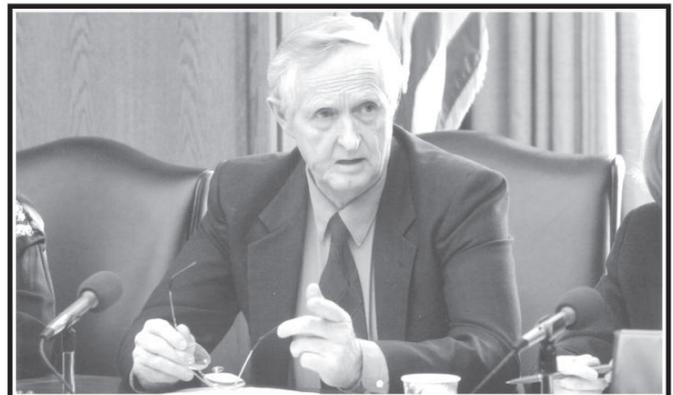
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# Why Local GI Was Made A French Knight

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13

fortifications, leaving it up to the combat engineers to flush the Nazis out of the impenetrable bunkers. The Germans in the bunkers were able to shoot the engineers in safety while American tank and artillery shells just bounced off of their blast-proof reinforced-concrete fortifications.

"They were taking pot shots at us all the time." At last, the engineers came upon a solution. "We finally got a German halftrack [truck] and filled it full of explosives." The truck was driven up to the German-filled bunker and detonated. "They came out," Conrad assures, "bleeding through their noses."

Conrad's engineers often worked behind the front lines, but they were not envied for the job they did. They were behind the lines clearing up strong points of Nazi resistance that the front-line troops bypassed so they could move as far and as fast as possible into enemy territory.

His unit was mopping up a German position behind the lines on Thanksgiving Day, 1944. He was enjoying a Thanksgiving feast of cold beans with six other engineers when a German shell landed among them. One was killed. All were wounded. Shrapnel tore open Conrad's thigh. He said he fared the best out of all those sharing the holiday meal.

Meanwhile, the rest of the

division was liberating Strasbourg, a French town on the German border. The Americans had reached the Rhine River and were looking at Germany on the other bank.

South of the Third Infantry, however, the Germans still had a hold on French soil in the Vosges Mountains. This bulge in the line was called the Colmar Pocket, and General Eisenhower ordered it eliminated before the final invasion of Germany. The Colmar Pocket saw some of the worst fighting experienced by American soldiers in the war.

Conrad describes stacks of frozen bodies piled up "like cord wood" in the mountains, "Germans over here, Americans over there." He talked of seeing the mutilated body of a Nazi soldier. "I hope to God they killed him first," he says.

Like the deadly mosquitoes at Anzio, there were also dangers that did not carry rifles. Trenchfoot, frostbite, and hypothermia were widespread, leading to loss of fingers and toes and often death.

The snow and almost Fargo-like temperatures of the Vosges Mountains that January and February made the Colmar Pocket operation extremely difficult. "I've never seen so much snow in all my life," says Newgren, impressive for a man who has spent more than eight decades in the Red River Valley.

In addition to the snow making roads impassable, the Germans

felled trees into the road and planted landmines. It was the combat engineers who went ahead of the front lines to clear the roads with bulldozers and disarm the mines so the troops and tanks could advance. Finding and diffusing mines was extremely dangerous work, and the engineers were being shot at by snipers the whole time.

Conrad recalls a month where his 10th Engineer Combat Battalion lost 37 men to mines and snipers. He saw one engineer carrying two mines in his hands when he stepped on a third. "Just vaporized him. We found his shirt in a tree."

Conrad Newgren himself had a close brush with death while clearing mines in the Colmar Pocket. With mine detectors in hand, he and a small group of engineers were sent ahead of the lines, assured that they would be protected by American forces guarding the road in front of them. "They said the 63rd Division was up ahead. If it was, it was the 63rd German Division," Newgren grumbles.

They were beckoned over by a group of soldiers. As the engineers got closer, they realized the soldiers were wearing German uniforms. The Americans were stopped by a spray of machinegun fire. All these years later, Conrad is sure that this would have been

the end of his life, but he believes the Germans were firing warning shots intended to make the engineers surrender. Instead, they jumped into a ditch for cover.

Some of the soldiers wanted to surrender to the Germans, but Conrad refused. The infantry escort of Conrad's unit had a machinegun in a distant house that was able to give the engineers cover as they dodged bullets back to the American lines. "Get up and run a little bit, then you fall. Get up and run, then you fall." This is the way you dodge Nazi machinegun fire.

While the Third Division was reducing the Colmar Pocket, Hitler's last ditch attempt to defeat the Allies in France - the Battle of the Bulge - raged to the north. By early February of 1945, however, Hitler's offensive was broken and what was left of the German units in the Colmar Pocket were pushed across the Rhine into Germany. For their part in the Colmar Pocket operation the Third Infantry was awarded the Presidential Unit Citation as well as the French Croix de Guerre.

On March 22, 1945 after months of preparation, planning, and stockpiling supplies on a scale unseen since the D-Day invasion, the "Blue and White Devils" of the Third Division crossed the Rhine. Conrad and the engineers were tasked with bringing enough

soldiers across the river in inflatable rubber boats to make a bridgehead on the German side of the river. Conrad and the soldiers in his boat made it to the other side, paddling with oars under fire, and stepped out.

"I took the first boat of American troops across the Rhine River," Conrad says with a smile. Then he turned back to ferry three or four more boatloads of soldiers across the river. As soon as there were enough GIs on the opposite bank to hold a defensive perimeter, the combat engineers went to work building a floating footbridge of cork so troops could march across.

When that was completed, they built a stronger floating bridge for tanks and trucks to cross. Conrad Newgren and the engineers finished these jobs in spite of being shot at by the German machine guns, rifles and artillery, desperate to knock out the bridges before they were finished.

It was an extremely rare example of a military operation where everything went even better than planned, due in large part to the engineers finishing the bridges in a fraction of the time budgeted. Three American armies crossed the Rhine that day, and the Allies plunged into Germany.

There was one last defensive line that had to be blasted

CONTINUED ON PAGE 58

Here it is - - Your Own  
Third Division Song

## THE DOGFACE SOLDIER

Moderato

I WOULD-NT GIVE A SEAN TO BE A FAN-CY FANTS MARINE  
I'D RA-THER 'BE A DOG-FACE SOL-DIER LIKE  
AM-: I WOULD-NT TRADE MY OLD-O D'S FOR  
ALL THE NA-VY'S DUN-GA-REES FOR 'X THE WALK-ING  
PRIDE OF UN-CLE SAM-: ON ALL THE POST-ERS THAT  
READ IT SAYS THE, AR-MY BUILDS MEN- SO THEY'RE  
TEAR-ING ME DOWN TO BUILD ME O-VER A-GAIN- I'M  
JUST A DOG-FACE SOL-DIER WITH A RI-FLE ON MY  
SHOU-LDER AND I EAT A KRAUT FOR BREAK-FAST EV'RY DAY  
SO FEED ME AM-MUN-I-TION, KEEP ME  
IN THE THIRD DIV-I-SION, YOUR DOG-FACE SOL-DIER  
BOY'S O-KAY

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## Roland Dille Receives 2011 Heritage Award

### CONTINUED FROM PAGE 30

school's flag, which was lowered to half mast.

Two days after the shooting, the head of the student senate informed Dille that the students were planning to take over the administration building the next day. However, he had calmed them by saying that President Dille would meet and listen to their views. Dille agreed.

So, at 3:00 p.m. the next day, Dille traveled from his office to the student union with the chief of police. He rejected the offer to have 22 highway patrolmen from Dilworth come on campus. Also, a National Guard general who was a member of the board offered to bring a weapons vehicle to the university within six hours. Dille also turned him down.

"It was just packed," he said of his arrival at the student union. "You can't believe how many people were there."

Rumors were circulating that people from other states were on campus to organize the Moorhead students. Dille decided that he would speak and then take questions, but only from MSU students.

"I told them what we were going to do. I said the strike is over with as of now. But I realize that many of your are so deeply involved in these group meetings, I've sent out a memo to the faculty not to take roll call on Friday."

The deal worked, and the campus calmed down for the time being.

Ten days after the Kent State incident, two black students were killed and several were injured by white police at Jackson State University in Mississippi. A group of black students informed Dille they wanted to share their story, which was largely overshadowed by the previous shootings. A meeting was held and the students decided to go on strike.

"We were the only white college in the north that had a strike because of the killing of black students," Dille said. "So, you know, times were bad but there were a lot of things to be proud of."

Students from the nearby Concordia College and North Dakota State University campuses often joined with the Moorhead State students in demonstrations throughout Dille's tenure.

"When they asked me why our students were demonstrating I said it was because we taught them how to think for themselves," Dille said.

As university president, Dr.



The Roland Dille Center for the Arts houses Minnesota State University Moorhead's theater, film and communication studies departments.

Dille also dealt with the effects of integrating the campus. The university had made an effort to recruit black, Hispanic and Indian students to the school, with mixed results. Because of this, Dille received threatening phone calls against his family, and also had black paint thrown on his car.

"But, I gave a lot of speeches, and in the end, everybody accepted it," Dille said. "The town changed."

During his time as president, Dille saw the enrollment reach a high of 9,200 students in 1989.

In 1972 he helped create the Corrick Center for General Education, which allowed students who didn't qualify for Moorhead State to take transitionary courses to better prepare for college.

"I don't say that we're the best state college in the country," Dille said of his time at Moorhead State University. "But I never heard a discussion in which we weren't mentioned as a possibility."

Dille mentioned the willingness of the students to go beyond everyday school activities as a reason for the university's success. He also credited a faculty that provided solid teaching.

"I interviewed many people applying for jobs," Dille said. "Twice I overruled a department and the dean, and I was right both times. By my interviewing all those people they never brought in an idiot. They didn't want to look foolish. And that's why we had a good faculty."

When he wasn't busy with his duties as a 26-year university president, Roland Dille was active in several community groups.

Among his many accomplishments, he served as president of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities from 1981-82.

Dille was asked to be on the

Minnesota State Humanities Commission. Later, President Carter appointed him to a six-year term with the National Humanities Council.

"I went to Washington quite often," Dille said of his responsibilities beyond the school.

Eventually he began to wonder whether his absences were viewed as disinterest in Moorhead State by the university faculty. He decided to teach a freshman English class in the fall of 1979.

"Nobody criticized anybody that taught a freshman class," he said with a laugh. "That first year it was the best class I ever had. I realized afterwards it was my excitement to be teaching again

that made the difference. They were such darling people."

He taught the class until he became interim chancellor for the Minnesota State University System for nine months. Each month he met with the presidents of universities to review curriculum, finances and personnel issues.

Throughout his career, Dr. Dille made several educational visits to countries including France, Italy, Japan, Korea, Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, Egypt and Greece.

From 1982-83 he was chairman of the Moorhead Area Chamber of Commerce.

Dille also served as president of the Red River Valley Heritage Society, now a part of the Historical and Cultural Society of Clay County.

"I did that for many years," Dille said. "I have a long association with it all. It was a marvelous committee."

He spent six years on the Board of Governors of the Minnesota Historical Society.

A lifelong writer, Dille has completed between 25 to 35 articles on local history.

"I wrote them because I was editor of the monthly publication of the Red River Heritage Society," he said. "Anything I thought was interesting, I wrote about."

He also writes about his hometown, and is currently working on a history of Dassel and its surrounding townships.

"I also have given, over the years, a couple thousand speeches," he said. "I've got a pile of speeches that high. And there's even some that weren't bad!"

In 2009 he received the Legacy Leader Award from the Fargo-Moorhead Chamber of Commerce.

Nowadays, Dille stays busy writing historical articles, his memoirs, a mystery novel and a novel set in his hometown. He has already completed 70 pages about his WWII experiences. He plans to write about his time as president of Moorhead State University, now known as Minnesota State University Moorhead.

Every now and then he visits the campus, where he still has an office in the library.

He and his wife, Beth, reside in Eventide Living Center in Moorhead. They have three daughters and one son. Debra lives in Berkley, CA, Martha in Prior Lake, MN, Sarah in Moorhead and Ben in the Czech Republic. The Dilles have seven grandchildren and one great-grandson.

At 87 years old, Dille remains busy as ever. The last time he visited his office on the college campus there was still sorting to be done.

"I was doing two things," he said. "Throwing some stuff away, and then getting stuff together that I'm still working on. I've got more projects than anybody. I have more projects than the New Deal, I believe."



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# Hi Drache Was Navigator During Raids

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 29

people in back are doing?"

Hiram went through the bomb bay to the back of the plane. There were five crew members back there- the radio operator, who also manned the upper gun position, the ball turret gunner, suspended below the belly of the B-17, two waist gunners, one on each side, and the tail gunner.

When Hiram opened the door from the bomb bay he realized he had to smile. As soon as the crew saw him smile, they brightened up and smiled back. All they could do now was wait.

From Kiel they had to go about 60 miles west to the coast. Thirty miles west of the coast was the German island of Helgoland. From there it was 270 miles to Lowestoft, on the coast of England. There was an emergency landing field there. It was another 85 miles further to their base.

As they approached the island of Helgoland, five German ME-110's spotted them and lined up for the kill. Out of nowhere three allied P-51 Mustang fighters appeared and the ME-110's fled. They may have been shot down

by the P-51's, or they might have escaped. The crew of Drache's B-17 didn't know, or care, or ever find out. They were just glad that they had received air support from the Mustangs.

It was a long, slow flight over the North Sea to Lowestoft. They had two hours to watch for German fighters and listen to their engines drone as they strained to keep the B-17 aloft. Drache plotted their agonizingly slow progress. He and the pilot, co-pilot, engineer, and radio operator had work to do. The other five crew members could only pray.

Forty miles from the coast the number two engine began to vibrate. They could see oil starting to spill. Each engine had 36 gallons of oil, but it wouldn't last long at this rate. The pilot asked Hiram, "How far is it to England?" Hiram said, "Forty miles." The pilot said, "Let me know when we are 20 miles out."

Twenty miles from the coast of England the pilot shut down and feathered the number two engine.

Then he began a very, very shallow descent. There was an emergency landing field right at the coast, but they had to arrive



Dr. Hiram Drache was a teenager when he dropped out of college and joined the U.S. Army Air Corps in 1943. The kids of the "Greatest Generation" grew up fast on the battlefields of Germany, Africa and the South Pacific. Drache was one of the lucky ones who returned home after the war to lead a successful life in the country that he helped to save and shape. One in four of his comrades in the B-17 crews never made it home, being shot down and killed in combat. Dr. Drache is shown above at home with a model B-17 and map of Germany indicating the location of bombing strikes he took part in.

with a few hundred feet of altitude in order to land. They had to go 20 miles and had about one-half mile of altitude to lose. They could descend at a rate of about 40:1, about one fifth of the normal glide ratio of a B-17. It would be tight.

The last ten minutes of flight seemed to take forever, but they made it. They landed at the emergency landing strip on the beach at Lowestoft. One of four engines was all that was running. They had cheated death, at least until the next flight.

Drache and the crew of "Thy Will Be Done" would continue to make bombing raids into Nazi-occupied territory until the end of World War II. Despite unbelievable damage to their aircraft they were one of the crews that survived the war. Over 25 percent of their comrades did not survive these B-17 bombing runs.

On Tuesday July 7, 2009, Paul Randall met with Hiram Drache at the Fargo Air Museum to see the B-17 'Aluminum Overcast' that had stopped in town during its tour.

Randall comments below, "On Tuesday July 7, I spent the day with Hiram Drache at the Fargo Air Museum. I thought the Monday B-17 flight was enjoyable, but Tuesday was even better.

"I met Hiram Drache when I was growing up in Baker, MN.

I had read his book 'Day of the Bonanza,' but I had never known that he was a B-17 navigator in WWII. Talking with him and learning more about his experiences was absolutely fascinating. Once he finishes the books he is currently writing I hope he will write one about his experience in WWII.

"When I was interviewing Drache for the previous articles, I asked him if he would be interested in flying in a B-17 again. He replied that his wartime experience was quite enough to last a lifetime. So, I flew without him on Monday July 6. He did, however, join me at the Fargo Air Museum on Tuesday. We had a busy and productive day.

"Drache and I walked around the B-17 taking a few pictures as we discussed his combat experience. We then went to his apartment in South Fargo where he and his wife, Ada, showed me a B-17 model that his son built for him.

"The model is mounted over a map of Germany, with pins that show the targets of the raids that Drache participated in. Signatures of all the crew members are prominently displayed on the edges of the base.

"It is a beautiful and fitting tribute to a man who served his country honorably and well as a member of this nation's "Greatest Generation."

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## Meet The Historical & Cultural Society Staff



**DR. MAUREEN KELLY JONASON**

Dr. Maureen Kelly Jonason, executive director of the HCSCC, was born in Moorhead at St. Ansgar's hospital but spent nine years of her childhood in Harvey, ND before returning to Fargo in 1971. She has five brothers and sisters.

She earned a bachelor's degree in English at NDSU and worked for four years for a travel company before going back to NDSU for her master's in English. She taught college writing and humanities for 20 years, completing her Ph.D. at UND in 2004. She loves flower gardening, reading and traveling with her husband Martin Jonason, who teaches acting in their Fargo home. She has been with HCSCC for three years.



**MARK PEIHL**

HCSCC Archivist Mark Peihl grew up in Hunter, ND and attended the University of North Dakota in Grand Forks graduating with a bachelor's degree in history in 1978. He worked for Rochester Armored Car Company for seven years and began working as a volunteer for the HCSCC in 1985. In 1986 Mark was hired as the HCSCC Archivist.

He enjoys hunting, fishing, canoeing, hiking and camping. Mark lives in a 75-year-old home in north Fargo with his wife Gloria and their yellow lab Zoe.

\*\*\*\*

She became director of the Clay County Historical Society in May 2002 and Collections Manager for HCSCC in January 2009. Lisa enjoys spending time with her family, traveling, attending FM Redhawks baseball games when possible, and researching her family history.

\*\*\*\*



**TIM JORGENSEN**

HCSCC Events Coordinator Tim Jorgensen finished his MA in Folk Studies from Western Kentucky University in 2006 and now applies this education to his native community, Fargo-Moorhead. His favorite historic periods include The Viking Age, The American Old West, and The Vietnam War. He also enjoys playing bass, teaching Norwegian, and barbecuing.

As the events coordinator, he orchestrates the cultural and history-centered events offered throughout the year. From start to finish, he works closely with the HCSCC staff, event participants, and the community to ensure mutually-beneficial results while meeting the mission's goals.

\*\*\*\*

firm in downtown Fargo, as the marketing communications intern before she was hired at the HCSCC. Brianne is on the Lake Agassiz Habitat for Humanity ReStore PR/Marketing Committee and during her free time, she also enjoys reading, running, and spending time with her friends and family.

\*\*\*\*



**MARKUS KRUEGER**

As the Visitors Services Coordinator for HCSCC, Markus Krueger leads the group tours, coordinates the museum's several dozen volunteers, writes for newsletters and exhibits, and like everybody at HCS, does what needs doing around the museum.

He spent almost all his life living up and down the Red River Valley but considers Moorhead his home town. Markus graduated from Moorhead High and went on to Minnesota State University Moorhead where he studied art history and history.

Markus volunteered as a tour guide for the Hopperstad Stave Church before being hired on as staff. He enjoys the unique

opportunity to study and interpret both Viking Age history and local history at the museum, his two favorite subjects. Markus also serves as vice president for the Probstfield Farm Living History Foundation, which is currently restoring the home of early Valley pioneers Randolph and Catherine Probstfield.

Markus and wife Megan just bought a home in Moorhead with a Cold War era bomb shelter in the basement.

\*\*\*\*



**KAYCEE PETERSON**

HCSCC Gift Shop Manager Kaycee Peterson is from Rolette, ND and graduated from Rolette Public School in 2007. Shortly after graduation, she moved to Moorhead to pursue new opportunities. Kaycee began with the HCSCC in December 2010 and also works at the Dilworth Walmart as an apparel associate.

Kaycee's interests include animals and horses—she used to volunteer for the Humane Society and is going to start taking horseback riding lessons. She plans to attend school in the fall at the Skills & Technology Center in North Fargo.



### Time to Say Goodbye...

HCSCC office assistant/membership clerk Lynn Catherine passed away unexpectedly on August 26, 2011. Lynn was a lovely colleague who took good care of looking after memberships, making lots of calls to invite lapsed members to renew and following up with all kinds of inquiries from current members. She also took care of ordering supplies and preparing board packets for monthly meetings. Lynn especially loved her daughters Jennifer, Tina, and Karina (Carmen) and spoke of them often. Lynn will be greatly missed. May she rest in peace.



**LISA VEDAA**

HCSCC Collections Manager Lisa Vedaa lives in Fargo with her husband Rob and three sons, Jacob, Evan and Erik. Her interest in history was sparked early, with her grandmother's National Geographic magazines and grade-school field trips to local historic sites.

Lisa cherishes her childhood and formative years on her family's farm near Ruso, North Dakota. She graduated from Velva High School and earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Public History with a minor in Anthropology from North Dakota State University in 1998. She attended St. Cloud State University for a Master's in Public History, and began her museum career as Assistant Director/Curator at the Codington County Historical Society in Watertown, South Dakota in 1999.



**BREANNE CARLSRUD**

HCSCC Marketing Coordinator Brianne Carlsrud was born and raised in Fargo, North Dakota and graduated from Minnesota State University Moorhead in 2009 with a bachelor's degree in mass communications.

She previously worked at The Partner Channel, a marketing

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# Clay County Native Fought For U.S.A. WWII In Pacific Theater

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 42

was in good condition.

Bombings attacks on the airstrip had to be fixed right away. The Seabees would spread large mesh sheets on the clay to smooth out the runway and begin repairs so more planes could continue taking off and landing.

"It seemed like we were busy for quite awhile there," Thompson said. "We were always building roads, fixing things." The firefights taking place on Okinawa were never far from mind.

"We were close enough where we could hear the shooting all the time...hear the gunfire," Thompson remembers.

The Seabees were also tasked with moving Okinawan citizens from the war zone to safety. However, roughly 42,000 Okinawans died in addition to the 12,500 American and 110,000 Japanese casualties on the Pacific island.

"It took 82 days to secure an island that isn't as big as Clay County," Thompson said.

Despite the small size, the Japanese knew their environment and could use it against the enemy, often attacking from natural caves or mausoleums built into the hills.

When the island was secured, Thompson and the Seabees worked to build a more permanent camp.

They progressed from single pup-tents to 4x4s, which were larger tents that housed four soldiers with room for cots.

Finally they built quonsets to serve as dining halls and barracks.

However, all the hard work



Arvid Thompson's Navy memorabilia includes commemorative hats from his time as a Seabee in Okinawa, Japan.

came crashing down when a typhoon hit Okinawa in early October 1945.

Thompson remembers the night well: "It was one of those nights that we didn't go up on the high ground like we were supposed to do. When it hit we crawled up on our bellies. T

hat dirt and wind was blowing hard, and the rain. We laid up there for quite a few hours. We came back and there was nothing left of our camp."

Thompson had his personal camera in Okinawa, and black-and-white images in his collection show the gnarled remains of the structures it had taken so long to complete. After the storm the

soldiers had to return to tents.

Thompson left Okinawa a few months later, in early May 1946. The trip back to America lasted only 17 days without waiting for the large, slow ships. Thompson was discharged from military service at Fort Snelling on May 26, 1946.

Fifty years later, in June 1995, he returned to Japan with his friend and fellow Seabee Jim Loughlin, of Massachusetts. Upon arrival Thompson couldn't believe the changes on the island.

"Everything was built up when we got back over there," Thompson said of the incredible difference since he sailed away at the age of 18. "It was pretty entertaining."

He and 600 other veterans on a military tour saw a modern, bustling city where camps and battlefields had once stood. Automobiles had replaced horses and carts.

The old seawall that Thompson had crossed over while landing on the island under cover of darkness 50 years earlier had been replaced by a newer, higher wall.

The group spent five days touring the island. They shared meals with soldiers at many of the remaining military bases, and were treated to ceremonies and performances by their Okinawan hosts. Thompson said the tour kept him busy at all times.

"If you go that far you don't want to spend your time just

sleeping," he said. "I'm glad I did it." Thompson also participated in the 2007 Honor Flight program, where he visited the newly finished WWII Memorial in Washington, D.C.

After the war Thompson returned to Barnesville in the late 1940s and began farming with his older brother Eldon.

"It was a good place to raise a family," said Thompson, who married and had five children.

Today, Thompson's Navy

uniform is neatly pressed and preserved in a display case his children gave him as a birthday gift.

Along with his uniform, he keeps newspaper clippings, books and stacks of black-and-white photographs as reminders of his time overseas.

"It was a sense of patriotism," Thompson said when asked about his time spent serving in World War II. "This country was at war and I wanted to do my part."

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Arvid Thompson preserves his World War II Navy uniform in a display case given to him by his children.



## Twin Brothers Served In Iwo Jima Battle

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 21

on either side of a fellow Marine when a volley hit between the twins, killing their friend.

Or the time Engel seemed compelled to get out of his tent and look around. The specks above the horizon were Japanese strafing planes. Seconds after he pushed his buddy into a foxhole, their bunk was demolished.

But luck would run out for Engel on the shores of Iwo Jima.

*After ceaseless air bombardment, the ground battle for Iwo Jima began on February 19, 1945. Twins John and Engel Bergseid, drivers with the 5th Amph Trac Battalion, 4th Marine Division, tell of their survival and their return home to Rollag, Minnesota.*



John, left, and Engel Bergseid returned to Minnesota after the war and lived on adjacent farms west of Rollag.

increased under the guiding hands of their maestro. The American's lightly-armoured, slow-moving tractors became easy targets as they bogged down in soft, volcanic ash...None made it more than 50 yards inland..."

"Within 45 minutes, the beach overflowed with 9,000 men, tanks, tractors, jeeps, beached landing craft and tons of war material in one huge traffic jam..."

"Within an hour, Kuribayashi's strategy paid off handsomely. For every man he lost, America sacrificed ten."

---

In one of the latter waves, John's amph trac made it to shore. A success in itself, right there!

My god! The beach was littered with bodies! He radioed his superior of the situation and that he couldn't go on.

"You have to!" he was ordered. And he proceeded on as he watched human remains being chewed to bits by the tracks of his machine.

"The wind shifted at 11:00 a.m. the next morning, February 20, to create a favorable lee shore for the Landing Craft, Vehicle/Personnel (LCVP)... A few lucky amphibians dashed in, unloaded and dashed out. The others added their bones to the mounting scrapyard on the beach.

"It became all too obvious that American forces would fail in their planned objective of capturing Iwo Jima within the four-to-ten day schedule. Kuribayashi had done his work well."

On February 21, after his rig had made it to shore, Engel jumped out to question a nearby

officer. As he was returning, the amph trac was hit to the right, to the left, ...and at mid-point.

Later his helmet and dog tags were found. And Joe and Ida Bergseid of Rollag, Minnesota, were informed that one of their twin sons had been killed in action.

"By D plus 4, the 5th Marine Division had made sufficient progress against Mount Suribachi that the order was given for the 2nd Battalion of the 28th Marines to secure and occupy the crest."

In his narration, Don Marshall hinted slightly that perhaps the American Marines, with the help of Seebies Naval Engineers and the Navy, were gaining ground

on this heap of volcanic ash measuring five miles long and two and one-half miles at its widest.

It was this soft, dry ash, called pumice, which was the most detrimental to the Americans. Mistakenly assumed as sand, it gave no support to the equipment trying to gain a foothold on the beaches.

For a Marine trying to run, "... it felt like plowing through knee-deep mud, pulling one leg at a time free..." Marshall commented.

At 10:20 a.m., February 23, 1945, five Marines and a navy medical corpsman set the United States flag atop Mount Suribachi,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 53



A U.S. National Archives photograph show the bombed amph vac evacuated moments earlier by driver Engel Bergseid.

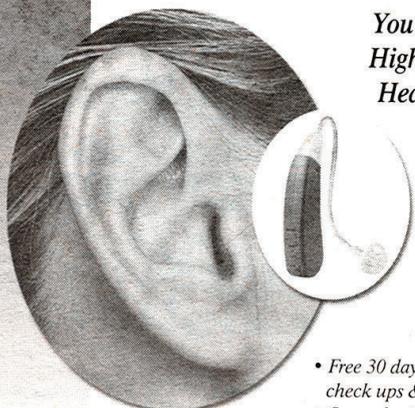
### IWO JIMA D-DAY FEBRUARY 19, 1945

"...At 6:40 a.m., the heaviest pre-H-Hour bombardment of World War II began." Former Marine and close friend of Engel Bergseid, Don Marshall continued his narration of the Battle of Iwo Jima in an issue of the British publication, "After The Battle."

"The first wave of Marines met only scattered, small arms fire, mortar and small anti-tank fire, but once Gen. Kuribayashi's warriors settled into firing positions, the tempo and volume of fire

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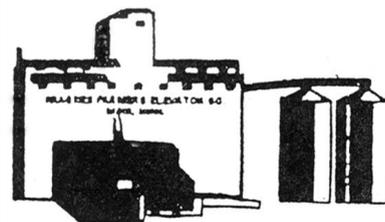
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30.6% of the population of Moorhead claimed Norwegian ancestry in the 2000 census. According to the Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups, that is the highest percentage of any city in America with a population over 30,000. Some places in Clay County have Moorhead beat, however. 31.3 % of the population of Barnesville, 33% of Glyndon, 34.3% of Oakport, and 44.5% of Hawley claim Norwegian heritage.



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# Hawley Native Stormed Beaches as WWII Engineer

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 22

"We were there on that beach for 15 days, doing engineer work and getting vehicles across the beach," Johnson said. "All the time the Germans were strafing us with their airplanes. They had air superiority over the landing. We never saw any of our own planes. It was all enemy."

In total, there were 85 German missions against the invasion during the three-week period. Johnson recalled when a Landing Ship Tank (LST) was targeted by a German plane. The aircraft dropped a 500-pound bomb onto the ship as it was being unloaded.

"Instead of impacting it skipped off the deck and came tumbling over the beach," Johnson said. "I saw the bomb coming off to my right. It bounced and went into our CP and blew up. It killed everybody in it. The only reason I'm still alive is I happened to see it coming and managed to get under cover."

The invasion force fought back with fire support from British ships.

"You'd see a couple of these big shells lobbing over. They glowed in the night," Johnson said. "These mortars must've weighed anywhere from 500 to 700 pounds."

The efforts kept German forces at bay and allowed the engineering work to continue. After about a month at Salerno, Naples Harbor was usable and the 531st returned to England the day before Christmas of 1943.

While overseas, it often took half a year for a letter to make it back to the United States. Johnson wrote every now and then, but he was often busy monitoring the mail sent out by his battalion.

"Most of the time you didn't



Amphibious vehicles, like the one shown above, were frequently used in beach landings during WWII. Erwin Johnson and his battalion operated amphibious vehicles that ran on tracks, often referred to as amptracs. The group received the first amphibious track vehicle delivered to Africa and tested its battle readiness. *Photo from National Archives*

have any trouble at all," he said. "Once in a while you had somebody that wanted to let their parents know where they were, and you couldn't do that."

Johnson's parents DID find out where he was, but in an unexpected way. After his battalion finished sweeping a minefield, Johnson agreed to an interview with a Chicago Tribune reporter. The story ran in the United States, and was cut out and mailed to Johnson's parents by a Chicago

salesman they were acquainted with.

"This was the first time they knew of where I was," Johnson said. "And it was in the Chicago Tribune."

Once again everyone knew a major landing was being planned, but not where. Lefty Johnson and another officer were selected to report to London to share their knowledge learned from successful amphibious landings in the Mediterranean Theater.

Johnson reported to Service and Supply headquarters in the Selfridge Building. He was given a "Bigot" badge that put restrictions on who he could talk to and talk about.

"It was a higher degree of secrecy than top secret," Johnson said. "While I was there I was interviewed by several high-ranking officers concerning landings."

As the D-Day invasion of Normandy was being planned, practice exercises were held in the south of England, including the ill-fated Operation Tiger at Slapton Sands. The site had been chosen for its similarity to Utah Beach in France. Johnson was part of the shore party when German torpedo boats that had been patrolling the area happened upon the scene.

"All of a sudden, out in front of us about three to four miles,

public until after the war.

After the Slapton Sands disaster, Johnson, now an S3 Plans and Training Officer, returned to the Selfridge Building and helped plan for the upcoming D-Day invasion.

"My job was to help make a landing plan for our unit as to who would go in, and where and why," he said.

The finished product was 50 pages long, and included everything from the first man hitting the beach to the unloading of mess equipment at the end.

"They had a marvelous plan," Johnson said. "It really worked. We had very few snafus getting ready to make this operation."

The soldiers left England for Normandy, France, on June 4, 1944. Two days later they arrived and unloaded into landing craft. However, the okay to move forward had not yet been given, and the soldiers ended up circling the ships as they waited. By the time they got the go-ahead, the entire group had drifted roughly one-half mile to the left.

"This movement to the left was the most fortunate thing that happened to Utah Beach," Johnson said. "If we would've landed where the assignment was, we would've landed right in front of fortifications that were manned."

Instead, the soldiers landed on a swampy portion of the beach where the Germans hadn't built up defenses. Fifteen minutes after the infantry, Johnson and his team came onto the shore.

"We were very surprised that nobody was shooting at us," Johnson said.

One team detail got to work sweeping the minefield. The other set to work demolishing a seawall.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 55

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## Twin Brothers Served In Iwo Jima Battle

**CONTINUED FROM PAGE 51**  
as recorded by Joe Rosenthal in his now-famous photograph.

The cheer rising from the Marines as the flag was positioned is something John Bergseid will never forget!

Typical of that second sense that twins seem to possess, John was sure that his brother was still alive. Searching wherever possible, he found Engel, swathed in bandages, aboard a hospital ship. However, it was weeks before their parents would be informed of the error and assured their son was alive and recovering.

Unconscious, without helmet and dog tags, Engel had been dragged to safety by another wounded Marine.

At that same time, Don Marshall's amph trac had also been destroyed. However, he had escaped serious injury and was located a week later at the front.

Marshall was recommended for the Silver Star. But because he had been officially AWOL from his unit the award was denied him.

Engel, the shorter twin, was never heavy. He weighed just 140 pounds when he enlisted. Now as he put on his dress uniform to accept the Purple Heart, he found that his 124-pound-frame was lost in that huge uniform.

Since his jacket came to just above his knees, he shortened his pant legs up across the thigh with safety pins. Afterwards, his CO told him to go get a better-fitting uniform.

Before it was all over, John was also wounded by a seemingly minor superficial gash. He pulled the shrapnel piece out of his

flesh below the rib cage, and was treated by a field corpsman before returning to battle.

But a bit of the metal had been left. In time, it festered and became gangrenous. John spent four months in the hospital recuperating. He was never awarded the Purple Heart.

The effects of the injuries that both men sustained remain with them to this day.

Each member of the outfit received a paper of commendation when the 5th Amph Trac Battalion was awarded three Presidential Unit Citations and the three Naval Unit Citations.

Both John and Engel Bergseid are members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars and Disabled American Veterans organizations.

During their years of service, the twins became acquainted with several people who have remained friends throughout the years.

One was an area man, Marine Master Sergeant Norman Brenna of Ulen, then stationed on Saipan. In charge of the commissary, he'd give the brothers fruit and other goodies that they'd take back to their buddies.

They recalled the time when they were in his quarters--without a pass, and were a bit concerned lest they be caught.

"Hell, you don't need a pass," Brenna assured them. "You're with me!"

Perhaps their best known friend was 45-year-old war correspondent Ernie Pyle, who was later killed in April of 1945.

Taking canned fruit out of the galley was forbidden aboard ship. But Pyle, whose pal was the cook, had invited the two brothers from Minnesota into his bunk to share his loot. When the skipper came by he took a look--and quickly retreated, apologizing for

disturbing the party.

Others were fellow amph trac drivers including Don Marshall, whose tractor was demolished moments before Engel's, and a very special friend, Ed 'Skip' Stalling, who rescued Engel.

For the twin Marines from Rollag, Minnesota, the fight was over.

In 1986, John and Engel attended the first reunion of the 5th Amphibious Tractor Battalion in Memphis, Tennessee.

Since then, John and Engel, with their wives Elva and Marion, respectively, attended many more of the events, including a 1992 reunion in San Diego commemorating Pearl Harbor where the Marine Corps specifically honored the 5th Amphibious Tractor Battalion. The survivors were wine and dined in high style, with the Marines in full dress blues.

Another common event the brothers attended was the Aviation Expo. Each year, six Marine veterans were selected to re-enact the flag raising on Iwo Jima. Both Engel and John have participated in the ceremony.

In the years since the war's end, the twins returned to Rollag, eventually settling down to farm.

They hadn't graduated from high school as teenagers, so they took courses to get their diplomas during their stint in the Marines. After their discharge, both took some college courses.

As twins, the two have remained close. But that doesn't mean that they've pursued the same interests: John became a game warden, and also got his

aviator's license. Engel has not.

But he and Marion have traveled to Europe, finally getting to Norway! John has not.

The Bergseid twins have lived a lot of life together--in Minnesota, and on some islands in the Pacific.

For most of their adult lives they lived on either side of a small country road west of Rollag. John on the south, and Engel almost directly across to the north.

Since the original publication of the preceding article in 1995, John and Engel continued to attend military reunions across the country until around the year 2000. John's wife, Elva, commented that the former Marines always looked forward to the annual events, traveling to South Dakota, Texas, California and more to attend.

They stayed in contact with several of their friends and fellow soldiers through letters and Christmas cards.

In 2008 Engel moved to the Rosewood on Broadway nursing home in Fargo, followed by John in 2009. The brothers remained together in the Alzheimer's ward at the center until Engel died on June 22, 2011, at 87 years old.

John passed away as this tabloid went to press on Wednesday, October 5, 2011, at 88 years old.



At the first reunion of the Fifth Amphibious Tractor Battalion in 1986, Engel, left, and John were warmly greeted by their old buddy, Don Marshall.



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# Former Publishers Recall WWII Memories



Ken Anderson served as a B-24 top turret gunner in the Army Air Corps. He flew 11 combat missions over Germany from 1943-45.

## CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

was even farm editor, and I didn't know much about it," she said.

Ken and Gerrie met through a mutual friend and married in 1947. The new couple began searching

for a way to make a living.

"We decided to get into the newspaper business," Ken said.

They enrolled in a two-year program at the Wahpeton State School of Science to learn the printing trade.

Upon graduation the Andersons bought their first paper, the Battle Lake Review, in 1949. They operated the publication together for four years.

"We did it all ourselves," Ken said. "We set the type, put the pages together, printed it, folded it, mailed it. I don't know how we were able to survive that."

The couple split duties at the paper. Gerrie handled the news writing and set type on the Linotype, a typesetting machine that produced whole lines of text rather than individual letters. Ken sold advertising, covered local news and sports, and wrote editorials.

The couple operated the Barnesville Record-Review from 1953-1966. Their staff of five employees included Ken, Gerrie, a Linotype operator, a receptionist and a printer's devil, which is a type of gofer in the newspaper business. For a time that job was filled by Gene Prim, current owner of the Record-Review.

In 1966 the Andersons seized the opportunity to expand to a county seat paper in Windom, MN, located southwest of the Twin Cities.

They operated the Cottonwood County Citizen until retiring in 1988 and moving to a lakefront home near Battle Lake.

The Andersons sold the paper to their son Kim, who continued the family business. The couple also has a son, Kirk, and a daughter, Robyn.

The Windom newspaper is now

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Learn more at [www.larl.org](http://www.larl.org). Lake Agassiz Regional Library serves the Clay County communities of Barnesville, Hawley, Moorhead and Ulen.

in its third generation as a family paper under the ownership of Kim's son.

The couple is now retired and lives in their spacious two-level cabin by East Battle Lake.



Gerrie Anderson graduated from the University of North Dakota with a journalism degree in 1942. She served in the WAVES, an all-female arm of the Navy, from 1943-1945.



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## Hawley Native Stormed Beaches As WWII Engineer

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 52

"It took us about 30 minutes to clear this minefield," Johnson said. "General Theodore Roosevelt Junior was on the beach with a party at this time. He and some other officers watched us clean this minefield out."

The demolition team destroyed the seawall and the ships began to unload. A nearby harbor had been destroyed by the Germans, so all equipment had to be unloaded across an open beach.

"That's a man-killer in the first place, just from the work that's involved," Johnson said. "But finally the day came that the harbor was operational, and then our mission on the beach was finished."

The 531st Engineers were broken into three battalions: the 351st, 352nd and 353rd. Lefty Johnson served as company commander in the third.

The battalion served briefly in France, then was assigned to road work near Aachen as part of Simpson's 9th army.

"We were up there doing engineer work, which involved replacing bridges and fixing roads so they're more passable. Just general engineer work of that type," Johnson said.

He later helped build "cigarette camps," which were camps used by soldiers just before shipping home or to the Pacific Theater. Instead of numbering the camps,

they were named after cigarette companies like Lucky Strike and Philip Morris.

Most of the labor for the camps came from German prisoners of war.

"These German POWs were very thankful to get a good meal, and they worked very hard as a result," Johnson said. "So we were building these cigarette camps and then we got orders to drop everything and go up to the Battle of the Bulge."

The battalion transferred over to Montgomery's force in November 1944. They provided support by preparing bridges for demolition and fixing bridges for troops.

"We built the biggest bridge in the European Theater of Operations as a means of getting Montgomery's troops across the Albert Canal in case the Germans got across the river," Johnson explained.

The battalion's work continued until the middle of January, when the conflict was winding down. Johnson returned to building cigarette camps. He heard about the German surrender while replacing a bridge with a unit in Lindberg, Germany.

"We kept right on building," he said. "Until the bridge was finished and usable we didn't even stop. When we DID stop, we had a pretty good celebration. I think there was a lot of hangovers.

German liquor was easy to come by."

Eventually the soldiers were put in one of the camps and sent home, but Johnson, who was an officer, was kept behind to prepare for the battle in the Pacific.

"We were in southern France looking at the possibilities of where we could be of some benefit as people that had made a lot of beach landings," he said. "When they dropped the bombs and ended the war in Japan, all bets were off. We went home.

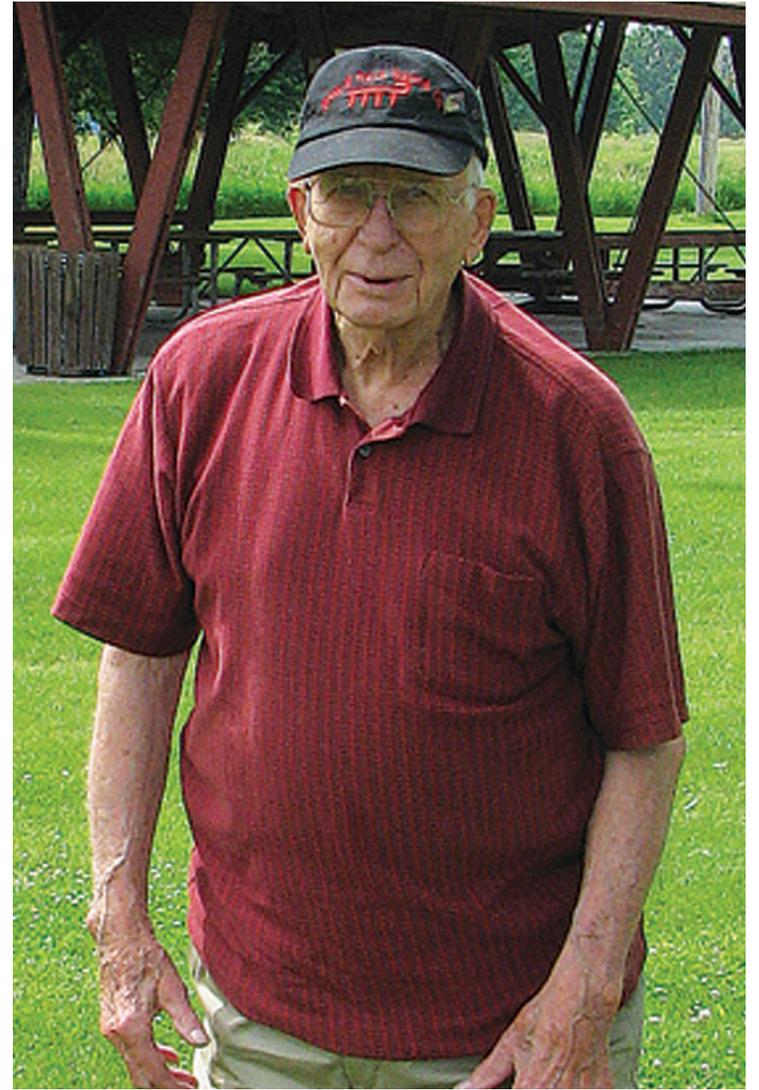
"All we knew was that Japan had surrendered because demolitions had been dropped on them. I can't even recall when we realized it was atomic. We didn't realize the enormity of it."

Lefty Johnson returned to Hawley almost five years to the day he first got the commission for military engineer school.

"I got on a Greyhound bus and came home," Johnson said. "I said hello to my parents and got to work the next day."

Johnson has lived in Hawley ever since. He joined the reserves and has stayed connected to the military his entire life.

In addition to his WWII service, Johnson has worked hard to improve his hometown. During the spring flooding of 1969, he organized the digging of a ditch to prevent water from overtaking the city. He also directed the building of a park shelter with help from



Erwin Johnson returned to his hometown of Hawley after WWII. He has helped to build ditches, rodeo grounds, expand the town golf course and organize the construction of the park shelter seen above.

the Fargo engineer reserves.

Johnson was involved in the expansion of the town golf course from six to eighteen holes. The course now stretches to the east and includes land that was once the local "poor farm."

Johnson was also instrumental in the creation of the Hawley Rodeo Grounds and softball complex. He continually planted and transplanted a variety of trees around the course to improve its physical appeal.

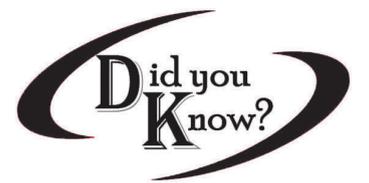
Looking back on his wartime experiences, Johnson considers himself lucky.

"There's not too many people who have made that many beach landings and not gotten themselves hurt one way or another," he said. "I had some close calls, but anybody would. But I had some good men under me. I had some seasoned people that I could depend on."

Being a soldier in the 531st Engineer Shore Regiment was a job filled with danger, but to those serving, it was to be expected.

"It was all part of the mission of being an engineer," Johnson said. "When you've got somebody that's working on a job, and you're part of that job and the mortars come in and there's some shrapnel and some people getting cut up, that's just part of a day's work."

"There was almost no time that I didn't realize what my job was, what was expected of me and the men under me."



Nassib Shaheen, born in what is now the Syria/Lebanon area, was the first person in Clay County to sign up to fight in the First World War. He was also the first Clay County soldier to die in the war. 18% of US soldiers who fought in the First World War were immigrants.

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# WWII In The Media: Front Line Reporting

CONTINUED FROM  
PAGE 41

or her German lover, Gillars was sentenced and served 12 years in prison at Alderson, West Virginia.

She was released in 1961 and later became a music teacher in Columbus, Ohio. Gillars died in 1988.

'Tokyo Rose' was the Pacific counterpart to 'Axis Sally.' Instead of referring to just one person, the name 'Tokyo Rose' was given to many female radio hosts. However, it was ultimately applied to Iva Toguri D'Aquino, the only American citizen broadcasting for the Radio Tokyo company.

D'Aquino accepted a position with the Japanese Domei news agency and hosted the 'Zero Hour' program. Like 'Axis Sally's' show, it featured American popular music mixed with propaganda. D'Aquino took on the handle 'Orphan Ann' during the program.

She was arrested and later put on trial for treason in 1949. D'Aquino denied she worked against the United States, and claimed she and other Allied prisoners working on



Edward R. Murrow worked for CBS during WWII. His opening line, 'This is London,' became a trademark during his war reporting while overseas.

the radio program tried to weaken its impact.

She was ultimately sentenced to 10 years in prison, but served six. After her release she operated a family gift shop in Chicago. In 1977 she was pardoned by President Gerald Ford and later died in 2006.

Despite the intentions of the governments creating them, most enemy radio program were often enjoyed by troops, who ignored the propaganda messages and focused on the memories of home conjured by the American music.

American soldiers got a more regular taste of home with the creation of the United Service Organization. Better known as the USO, the group was formed in 1941 with help from the Salvation Army, YMCA, YWCA National Catholic Community Services, National Travelers Aid Association and the National Jewish Welfare Board.

The mission of the group was to provide emotional support for the troops as the United States entered WWII.

The organization created 'canteens' around the world, or clubs where soldiers could relax and be reminded of home and what they were fighting for. Canteens provided relaxation through dances, movies, food and conversation.

The organization ultimately made its name through entertainment shows, which

brought soldiers some of the country's top entertainers.

Perhaps the most famous face of the USO was Bob Hope, who became a household name for his tireless traveling and performing.

Hope began his career in vaudeville and theater before breaking in to radio and film roles. However, the entire nation became aware of Hope because of his work entertaining the troops during WWII.

Hope's first show at a military camp was held on May 6, 1941, and it would be decades before he stopped. The shows usually featured comedy, musical acts, and a parade of lovely women to entertain the troops.

Hope and the 'Hope Gypsies' traveled across Australia, Europe, Greenland, North Africa and the South Pacific to lighten the spirits of American soldiers.

Hope also started a 35-year tradition of Christmas specials held on a different military base. By the end of his career, Hope, who died in 2003 at 100 years old, had been a part of almost 200 USO shows.

In order to boost troop morale, many Hollywood performers traveled around the world to perform for the grateful audiences, including the Andrews Sisters, Bing Crosby, Mickey Rooney, Rita Hayworth, Lucille Ball, Frank Sinatra, Irving Berlin, Betty Grable, Laurel and Hardy, Marlene Dietrich, Judy Garland and many, many more.

One entertainer who also served in the military was Glenn Miller, who was already a world-famous bandleader when he signed up for duty on October 7, 1942. He was assigned to the Army Specialist Corps and earned the rank of Captain.

Miller's goal was to modernize the military band and use it to improve the morale of soldiers. Forming the Glenn Miller Army Air Force Band, he began performing hundreds of concerts overseas, starting in late 1943.

Many of the performances were broadcasted to millions of

listeners, and the events had an estimated total attendance of 600,000 people.

However, the music was cut short in December 1944. Miller was traveling to Paris to prepare for his band's upcoming six-week European tour when the plane he was riding in disappeared.

The question of Miller's fate has never been fully answered, but his music has lived on long after the war ended.

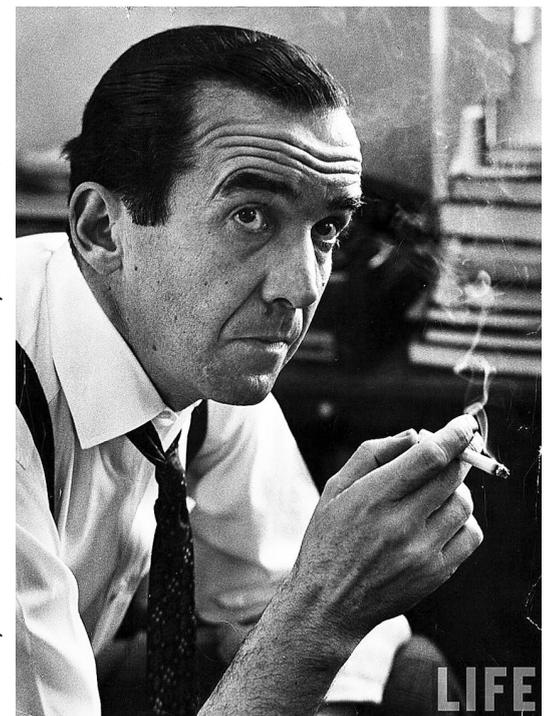
The USO continued to thrive during WWII, at one time conducting around 700 shows a day worldwide. The entertainment continued even after the war ended, and the USO remains active today.

While some stars from Hollywood kept the public entertained, many others signed up with Uncle Sam to fight for their country.

Among the enlisted stars were Clark Gable, Lee Marvin, Henry Fonda, Audie Murphy, Charles Durning, Neville Brand, James Stewart, Charles Bronson, Ernest Borgnine, Henry Fonda, Rod Steiger, Eddie Albert and Kirk Douglas.

Many of the actors went on to star in war films based on the conflict they were a part of.

World War II was a life-defining event for everyone involved. While many returned to the lives they led before the conflict, for a time they were all united, regardless of wealth or status, in the fight against a common enemy and the pursuit of freedom.



Glenn Miller enlisted in the U.S. military when he was already a famous bandleader. He organized the Glenn Miller Army Air Force Band and held concerts to raise morale among troops.

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## Former Mayor Fought In Battle Of The Bulge

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

Line, and met strong resistance.

For five days Stordahl was trapped in his foxhole. They weren't moving forward, but they weren't losing ground either. Each night the battalion had to deal with artillery from the German front. There were a few close calls.

Stordahl recalled an artillery shell that landed too close to his foxhole. The blast knocked him out, and a piece of shrapnel nearly hit his arm. Instead, he only had a torn sleeve in his coat and a few loose teeth.

Eventually the American forces broke through into Germany.

"We were in what was called the Third Army, which was Patton's army," Stordahl said. "His plan was that if the armored divisions moved rapidly enough, the Germans would not have enough time to set up good defenses."

The plan seemed to work.

"In a lot of the towns there was a lot of combat, but a lot of towns didn't even know we were coming," Stordahl said. "They thought we were a long ways away yet. We'd come roaring down the roads, shooting volleys, airplanes coming over and bombing ahead of us."

Stordahl estimated that dozens of towns were taken over by the American forces, with varying levels of resistance.

Once the town had been captured, troops would be set up in a perimeter to guard and defend from further attacks. If a soldier wasn't assigned guard duty they would get to sleep. After his battalion captured the city of Kronach, Stordahl was allowed to get some shut-eye.

He and members of his squad stayed in the home of a high-ranking German officer. Stordahl recalled it was the first time he'd enjoyed a real bed in months.

The American force moved across Germany, liberating towns and confronting resistance as it came. Stordahl and other members of the rifle squad were prepared to dismount their vehicles and walk with the tanks to fight back.

As the spring of 1945 stretched on, the soldiers could sense that the war was winding down.

Eventually the American forces met up with the Russian army in Austria. Now that combat was over, the troops were assigned to help refugees that had fled occupied lands for the American side.

"For a couple of months after the war our division was responsible for taking care of these people," Stordahl said "Most of them were from Hungary. We got to know some of them."

One of the refugees was Buzi Barna, a sculptor from Budapest. He found Stordahl and another

soldier and told them he was being transported home the next day. However, he could only bring back one of his suitcases, and wanted to sell two of his carvings since they couldn't be brought back.

"Well of course I didn't have any money, so I traded him my field jacket and gave him some K-rations," Stordahl said.

In return he got a four-foot-tall carving of Christ, which he sent home from Europe. The carving still hangs on Stordahl's living room wall, as it has for over 50 years.

Stordahl returned to the United States a few months after the war in Europe was over to prepare to enter the Pacific Theater. However, the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki occurred on his boat trip home, ending WWII.

During his two-year military career, Stordahl was awarded the European Service Ribbon, the Combat Infantry Badge, the Bronze Star and three battle stars.

Stordahl returned to Minnesota and enrolled at Concordia College. He graduated in 1950 and continued a construction business he had begun in school. For eleven years he built sidewalks and improved gutters around Moorhead.

Stordahl then went to work for the newly established Silverline

CONTINUED ON PAGE 62



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Ray Stordahl met Hungarian sculptor Buzi Barna when he was a war refugee. Johnson traded his field jacket and K-rations for one of Barna's carvings. Almost sixty years later Stordahl and his wife visited Budapest and reconnected with Barna, who had become a famous sculptor with statues in cities across Eastern Europe.



# Why Local GI Was Made A French Knight

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 46

through, a wall of defenses called the Siegfried Line. Artillery, machinegun bunkers, anti-tank ditches and barbed wire were placed amid thousands upon thousands of concrete pyramids, called "dragon's teeth," designed to make it impossible for tanks and other vehicles to travel through.

Conrad and the engineers had to crawl up to these teeth and blow them up with cone charges while the battle raged around them.

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder is not an invention of modern wars. He recalls his lieutenant "went crazy" and had to be restrained because he was trying to attack the Siegfried Line head on by himself. "With all the carnage we saw over there, it's a wonder we all didn't go crazy."

The old men and young boys that increasingly filled the ranks of the German army were no match for the overwhelming force of the Allied assault. The drive through Germany was a mixture of melting resistance as thousands of German soldiers surrendered and pockets of intense fighting as fanatical Nazis followed Hitler's orders to fight and die for the Third Reich.

The Third Division's official history written shortly after the war lists 101,201 German soldiers surrendering to the unit while they were in Germany. In fact, thousands of German soldiers facing the Russians fled west to surrender to American and British units rather than risk immediate execution or slow death in Siberian camps if they surrendered to the Red Army.

The Third Infantry's fight to



Conrad Newgren being inducted as a Knight of the Legion of Honor at the Fargo American Legion on Veterans Day, 2010.

take Nuremberg, however, was notoriously brutal. "It wasn't house to house fighting," he recalls, "It was room to room." The Russians were within days of entering Berlin and everyone knew that the Third Reich had fallen, but many diehard Nazis went to Nuremberg to make a last stand in the city that was called a "Nazi shrine."

"They put up a hell of a fight in Nuremberg," Newgren says quietly, respectfully. "That was Hitler's parade grounds, you know."

The battle was all the more painful because everyone knew

the war was all but finished. None of the American servicemen wanted to be the last to die. After hard fighting, the city fell to the Americans on April 20, 1945, Hitler's 55th birthday.

The Americans had a ceremony in the fairgrounds made famous in Nazi propaganda movies and, after awarding five men of the Third Infantry the Congressional Medal

of Honor, they blew up a giant bronze swastika. Conrad showed a chunk of this swastika that he kept as a souvenir.

On April 30, 1945, as Newgren and the Third Infantry were accepting the surrender of Munich and the Russians were pulverizing Berlin, Adolf Hitler committed suicide. By the time Hitler's successors surrendered to Allied

forces on May 8, Conrad was in Salzburg, Austria.

It was after the war, however, when Conrad may have come closest to death. Suffering another bout of malaria, Conrad was riding in an ambulance to a hospital. A landmine blew the ambulance off the road and it rolled four times before it stopped. Conrad woke up with a broken back. He never heard what happened to the two ambulance personnel in the cab or the three other men on stretchers in the back of the ambulance.

After the war, Conrad Newgren married a North Dakota girl named Florence. The two had a son named Michael, who now works as an editor for *Stars and Stripes*.

Conrad worked as an interior decorator like his father, starting Tynes Decorating with a friend.

Today, Conrad Newgren is often found at the Hjemkomst Center, sharing stories and coffee with staff and volunteers. You will know him by the blue and white stripes on his Third Infantry hat.

He was embarrassed but proud when observed in the hall this past winter, and I brought a tour group of school kids over to meet him.

I wanted to show them that important people, heroes even, are all around us. And after all, what are the odds that these kids from Minnesota will ever get another chance to meet a "real French knight".

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## “Workhorse” B-17 Bomber Returns To Fargo

By: Paul Randall and Anna George

On July 19 and 20, 2011, the ‘Aluminum Overcast’ B-17 Bomber returned to the Fargo Air Museum for the second time in three years.

On Monday, July 6, 2009, Paul Randall flew in the ‘Aluminum Overcast’ B-17 bomber with other members of the local press. He recalls his experience in the following story:

Before the flight, we were briefed by the crew chief. After the flight I had the opportunity to talk to the pilot and copilot who are both airline pilots with thousands of hours of flying experience.

I’m a pilot and a glider flight instructor, so I was thrilled when I got aboard and the B-17 crew chief told me to go forward and sit in the jump seat behind the copilot. My heart sank when I saw the jump seats- they face aft!

As an engineer I understand the arrangement. It is the safest possible position for a passenger, and occupants of the jump seats aren’t expected to be able to assist the crew. Still, it was ‘cruelty to dumb animals,’ as my parents used to say.

Fortunately, soon after we were lifted off we were allowed to unfasten our seat belts and look around the plane.

In the pre-flight briefing we had been told that after takeoff we should go in pairs to the nose of the B-17, look around, then move on so the next of the five pairs of people would have time to see the area.

I was interested in the nose compartment because that’s where Dr. Hiram Drache sat when he



The B-17 bomber ‘Aluminum Overcast’ first visited the Fargo Air Museum in 2009. It is one of the few air-worthy bombers left from WWII, when the aircraft was used for frequent bombing raids across enemy territory.

flew combat missions as a B-17 navigator in World War II. His battle station was on the left side of the plane, just behind the bombardier.

After I finished examining the nose compartment I headed back into the cockpit, then through the bomb bay on a catwalk that is less than a foot wide.

During our briefing the crew chief emphasized that if we dropped anything on the bomb bay doors we should not attempt to retrieve it, because the doors were designed to open if a weight of 85 pounds or more fell on them.

The 85-pound trigger mechanism was a safety feature of the B-17. In case a bomb got loose in the aircraft during flight it would fall into the bomb bay and then out of the airplane. This was a good feature, as the crews were not inclined to fly with live bombs rolling around loose in the aircraft.

Just aft of the bomb bay is the radio operator’s station. WWII vintage equipment is mounted

there, but it is not operational. In the interest of safety, reliability, and compatibility with modern navigation and communication facilities, all of the electronic equipment in the ‘Aluminum Overcast’ is new.

There is a removable aft-facing Plexiglas window in the ceiling above the radio operator’s station. In wartime a 50-caliber machine gun could be fired from this port.

Waist gunner’s stations were also just aft of the radio operator’s station. On early B-17s, waist gunners were directly across from each other and the two gunner operators frequently bumped into each other as they fired. This problem was solved by staggering the waist gunner’s stations on later

model of B-17s, including the ‘Aluminum Overcast,’ which is a ‘G’ model.

The B-17 that we were in also had nice plastic windows at the waist gunner stations.

This is a small matter at an altitude of 2,000 feet on a summer day in Fargo. However, B-17s typically operated at altitudes of 20,000 feet or higher in WWII. The temperature of the ‘Standard Atmosphere’ at 21,000 feet is minus 16 degrees Fahrenheit.

B-17s occasionally bombed from 32,000 feet, where the temperature of the ‘Standard Atmosphere’ is minus 55 degrees Fahrenheit. Factor in a 200 mph wind, and the wind chill is nothing

to laugh at.

We were not able to get into the ball turret or the tail gunner stations, although nobody seemed particularly interested in doing so.

The flight was fairly brief, but we were aloft long enough to see all areas of the B-17 while airborne, forming vivid impressions of what it must have been like in WWII combat.

The B-17G ‘Aluminum Overcast’ had a gross weight in combat of 65,500 pounds. It could carry 3,630 gallons (21,780 pounds) of fuel. By the time they arrived over their target they might have only 10,000 pounds of gasoline on board. In addition,

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 60**



Dan Bolin and co-pilot Kent Holiday flew the ‘Aluminum Overcast’ on Monday, July 6. There is not a lot of room in the cockpit but it does contain a simple, by today’s standards, instrument panel.

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## Peterson Recalls Time In WWII From Minnesota To Munich In World War II

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 16

island battleground before the end of the war.

Peterson used his knack for mechanics to improve living conditions during his time overseas.

He built a washing machine from a garbage can, valve refinisher and various junk pieces found on the island. It worked well enough, but did have a habit of turning all clothes a light shade of blue.

Peterson also fashioned a propeller from a wooden board. He hung it on a post and used wind power to operate a generator that gave his tent electric lights. It wasn't long before officers noticed and wanted their own illumination.

"You've got to know the right people," Peterson told them slyly.

He ended up rigging another set of lights so they could play cards and entertain themselves at night as well.

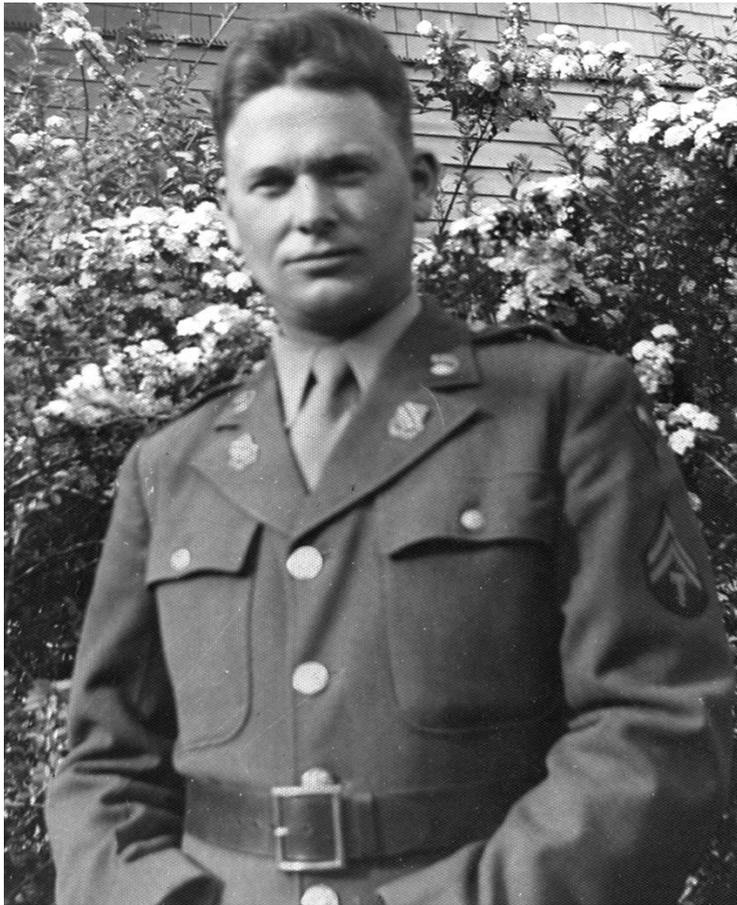
"It was one of the lighter things we had," Peterson said with a smile. "It wasn't all bad."

Peterson learned of the end of the war while watching a movie with several other troops. Everyone started firing their weapons, but he thought twice and moved away.

"Not me," he said. "This is a poor time to get shot."

Although the war was over, the way home was not easy. A typhoon separated the soldiers on land from their food at sea for seven days. The men were forced to survive on three crackers, three times a day, until they were finally able to load up their equipment and head home.

Once they were on the water a rogue wave nearly tipped the boat. The vessel rocked from side



Peterson, 27, poses in California, where he received training in 1942. His wife, Marian, traveled from Barnesville to visit him.

to side, and several cots flipped over Peterson when his own bed slid and hit a weld in the floor. The boat was built to withstand a tilt of 32 degrees. That night it had tilted 33.

After 16 long days Peterson sailed under the Golden Gate Bridge and was finally back in America.

Peterson and his wife decided to settle in Barnesville near their in-laws. They started a family and raised their children Marcia, Marilyn, and Alan, in town.

In 1976, Peterson was diagnosed with myasthenia gravis, a neuromuscular disorder caused by an abnormal immune system response that affects voluntary muscles. He was told it was terminal.

"No, I'm not going to settle for this," Peterson remembered thinking. "I'm going to get over this."

With treatment at the Mayo Clinic and the help of a Fargo neurologist, Peterson survived.

Today, at age 97, he continues to live at home in Barnesville and remains up-to-date on city affairs. He often goes out to eat at the local café or fast food joints, and maintains a near-perfect attendance record at Our Savior Lutheran Church.

"I only missed one Sunday in three years," Peterson said. "That was when I went to the Steam Threshers at Rollag on a Sunday."

Thinking back to his time in the war, Peterson remembered a conversation where an officer complimented his skill as a soldier.

"I've been scared since the moment I got in here," Peterson told him.

The officer advised him not to feel bad, and that he felt the same way. His words helped Peterson deal with the whole of his war experience, both good and bad.

"All in all, if you can get back in one piece you can live with the rest," Peterson said with a smile.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 18

experience was much different than most soldiers. However, he realizes it gave him a chance to see the world that he wouldn't have had otherwise.

"It was a learning experience in a lot of ways," Forsberg said. "If I was able to replace someone over there, whose service was probably longer than it should've been, then I feel like I did accomplish something. For that I'm grateful."



Eddie Forsberg poses in his military uniform while serving in Germany during WWII.

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Former Mayor Fought In Battle Of The Bulge



Ray Stordahl improvises a sponge bath in Germany during the spring of 1945. However, weather conditions weren't always so nice.

Although not quite as cold as Minnesota, snowy Belgium proved frigid enough that Stordahl vowed to never live in a cold climate again if he survived. However, he still ended up back in his home state of Minnesota.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 57

Boat Company

"I was there for almost twenty years," he said. "The last 10 years I was president of the company."

Silverline Boat Company closed in the early 1980s.

Stordahl then began working for the University of Minnesota epidemiology department. He ran the Fargo-Moorhead Heart Health Program for eight years before retiring. He also served four terms as mayor of Moorhead and won numerous business and civic awards.

Fifty years after the war, Stordahl returned to Houffalize, Belgium, for the dedication of a monument to the Eleventh Armored Division. He and his squad leader even found the same barn loft they had slept in during the war. He was invited to dinner

by the woman who lived in the home, who said she remembered soldiers being there years before.

Stordahl and his wife, Erma, also visited Budapest, Hungary, the home of many refugees he had met during the war. He decided to look up Buzi Barna, the man whose sculpture he had bought. Stordahl was surprised to learn Barna was now a famous sculptor with statues in cities across Eastern Europe, including a piece in the Kremlin. With the help of an interpreter, the two men reunited and had a two-hour discussion.

"To find the guy 60 years later, I don't know," said Stordahl, almost in disbelief at his luck. "And he remembered the carving."

The Stordahls have also visited Egypt, Israel, Turkey, Russia and various countries across Europe. They have three sons and four

grandchildren.

Stordahl's squad leader, who has since died, used to live in Alexandria, MN. The relatively short distance helped the two men stay in touch and talk about their experiences. Talking with his squad leader and visiting battlefields from years before helped Stordahl open up about WWII and its impact on his life.

Because he was just 18 when he joined the military, Stordahl is within the younger range of WWII veterans. For several years he attended meetings with other 11th Armored Division members. Most of them have now died. However, he remains positive about his life and the role WWII played in it.

"I don't have contact with any of them anymore, but I'm still hanging in there," he said. "I've had a long life."

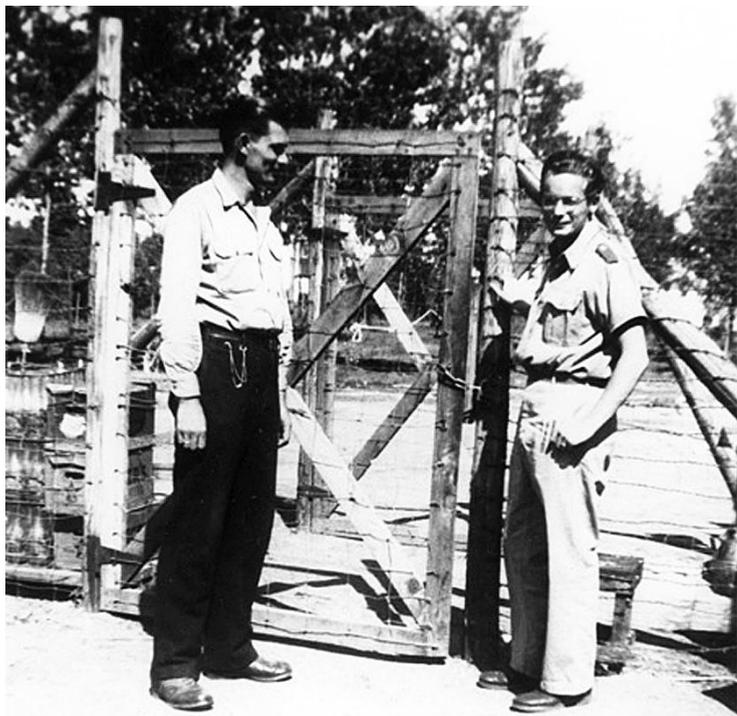
HISTORICAL & CULTURAL SOCIETY MEMBERS

Table listing members of the Historical & Cultural Society, including names and their home locations. The list is organized in columns and includes members from various Minnesota counties.

Advertisement for First National Bank, featuring the headline 'Housing Loans At Great Rates!' and 'Visit with our Mortgage Lender Specialists Sandy Larson, Sandy Severson or Dave Brenna and they will help you find the Right Mortgage'. Includes contact information for Hwy 10, Hawley, MN and Hwy 10, Dilworth, MN, and the website www.fnbhawley.com.



## German POWs Held In Moorhead During WWII, Worked On Area Vegetable Farms



CONTNUED FROM PAGE 34

The POWs also elected their own camp leader who spoke to the authorities for all of the prisoners through an interpreter.

It was a quiet summer at the camp. Mr. Schultz laughs that "It was pretty boring duty, really.

We just got them ready to go out to the fields in trucks with a few guards then got ready for them when they returned at night. That's about it."

The prisoners returned to Algona in the fall. Most were shipped back to Germany the following year.

After Autumn, 1944, it was the policy of the U.S. Army to introduce the POWs to American style democracy and our way of life - an effort designed to create a democratic postwar Germany.

Under the "Intellectual Diversion Program" the prisoners studied English, watched movies and read books and magazines selected to "reeducate" them in

American ways.

But it is unlikely that the program was any more effective in instilling an appreciation for American values than the simple humane treatment that they received from Horn, Peterson and the others here in Clay County.

In a letter to Peterson after the war, one former prisoner wrote in broken English, "Now I'm return from the United Staates [sic] to my homeland. I have been over

there 2½ years, a long time for me. But I did learn the American people and the democratic politik of America.... It was a good school for me. I want to be a democratic citizen here and the most population will the same.... Today I will thank you again through my letter. We have been not only good workmen, we have been good fellows, too. Every man likes you and I will never forget your truck farm."

Farm contractor Paul Horn, left, visits with a POW at the gate to the prisoners' compound. *Harvey Fleshner Collection.*



The onion warehouse, which served as the POWs' barracks, located at 324 21st Street North in Moorhead.

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# TESORO





# Silver Star Recipient Spent Life On Farm

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 39

like it had been half shot off.”

One of the soldiers marching nearby had stepped on a mine. The shrapnel from the blast shot through the windshield of Thomas' Jeep and peppered his face with glass. A large piece was lodged in his right cheekbone.

In shock, Thomas left his vehicle and ran back towards an aid station he had seen earlier.

“I imagine my face was swollen up to twice its size,” he said. “I ran until the shock settled in and I went down.”

Thomas was bandaged up and given morphine before being loaded into an ambulance and moved to a field hospital in Mirecourt, France. The doctors performed an operation to remove the shrapnel from his right cheek. He was then sent to a real hospital for further care.

“The next thing for me was to get the glass out of my eyes,” he said. “They gave me eye drops that froze them. Then they used a pointed scalpel to plink the glass out. I'm not sure but I think it took two days.”

Thomas also had two large wads of glass pulled from his nose. During the treatment he was kept in the eyes, nose and throat ward at the hospital. He received 80 shots of penicillin, one every three hours, for ten days.

During his stay the hospital was

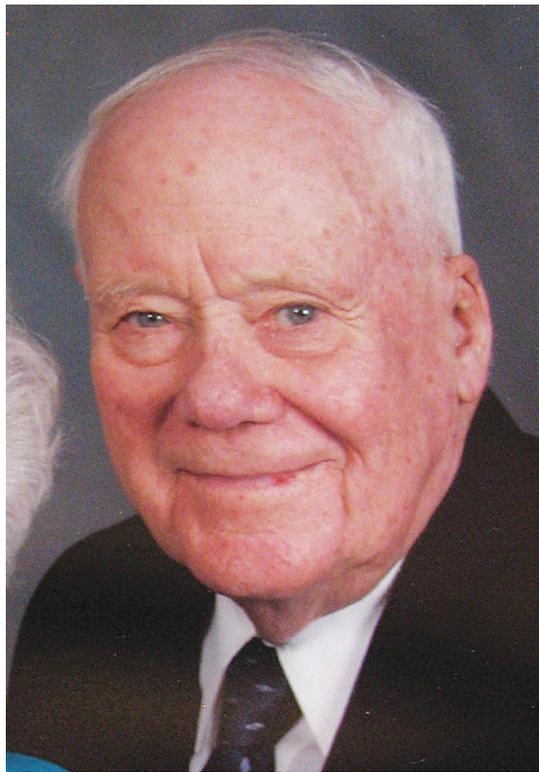
attacked by a German air raid. Thomas was placed between two windows so he was safe from the bullets. The aircraft also dropped a bomb, but it landed on a prisoner of war camp next to the hospital instead.

Eventually, Thomas realized he couldn't open his mouth more than a quarter of an inch. The doctor informed him he had also sustained a broken jaw.

“So he proceeded to stick a tongue depressor between my teeth and then attempted to get it edgewise between my jaws. He and I were both sweating before we made it,” Thomas said. “So I kept on doing it myself every day. It seemed impossible at first but little by little my jaw got looser.”

Thomas was released from a hospital in Paris in mid-January 1945 and returned to his company, much to their surprise. He soon found a new job as the driver of a 10-ton wrecker.

One day he, Lt. Bethers and



Aubrey Thomas lived on his home farm near Kragnes, MN, his entire life except for his time in the military. He and his wife, Cathy, now live in north Moorhead.

other soldiers from the motor pool were instructed to clear a railway tunnel that had been filled with railcars by German soldiers. Cars on both ends had been destroyed to slow down the advancing troops.

“There were still a lot of big

shells and bombs left on the other cars,” Thomas said. “It was up to me to move them. I hooked on to the first cars and let the wrecker pull them out. There were some unexploded bombs and shells that I had to take out. Anyway, we got the job done without any casualties.”

Thomas received a Silver Star medal and citation for his work at the railway tunnel, along with 10 more points towards going home.

Soon after receiving the medal, the German forces surrendered. Thomas and his unit were near Munich at the time.

“There were four of us that had never had a furlough,” he said. “We were given a choice of either going to Switzerland or England. I chose England. They dropped the first atomic bomb before we left.”

Thomas' friends told him not to go in case he got the chance to return home, but he decided it was worth it for a free trip to England. He and three other soldiers traveled by train to London.

“When we got to our hotel that evening we heard the war was all over,” he said. “The people were just wild. They walked down the whole streets throwing banners and toilet paper all over.”

Thomas spent his time in England visiting museums and roller skating rinks before receiving a telegram to fly to Frankfurt. He boarded a ship bound for America at Le Havre, France.

“As soon as we cleared the harbor we were in a storm,” he said. “It stormed for about a week. The waves were forty feet high.”

It was 12 days before Thomas saw American soil. The first things he bought after landing were a dozen doughnuts and a quart of fresh milk.

He was processed out of the military at Fort McCoy, WI, on October 8, 1945.

Thomas returned to the farm after WWII, eventually taking over operations when his father retired. He married his wife, Cathy, in 1951, and they raised four children together.

In 2007, Thomas took part in the Honor Flight program that visited the WWII memorial in Washington, D.C.

Since moving into Moorhead from the family farm nearly 20 years ago, Thomas has stayed busy volunteering with the Sons of Norway.

“Someone up there was looking out for me,” Thomas, now 89 years old, said of his time in the military. “I guess my tale proves that it's better to be lucky than smart.”

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## These Men Paid Supreme Sacrifice In WWII

Clay County recorded its first casualty of World War II on December 7, 1941, when Japan attacked the naval fleet anchored in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.

Going down with the U.S.S. Arizona was Boatswains Mate 2nd Class Walter Hampton, 34, a career Navy man originally from Barnesville.

Hampton was born and raised in Barnesville before joining the Navy on November 18, 1925. His body remains entombed in the sunken battleship that rests on the bottom of Pearl Harbor.

By the time the war ended, nearly four years later, over 3,000 Clay County residents had volunteered or been drafted. Seventy of those men would lose their lives in enemy action around the world.

These are their names.

### United States Army & United States Army Air Corps

- ★Technician Fifth Class L. Abrahamson, died of injuries
- ★Private First Class Raymond L. Anstenson, killed in action
- ★Sergeant Robert J. Austin, killed in action
- ★Private First Class Stanley E. Bakkum, died non-battle
- ★Private First Class Dennis D. Bellmore, killed in action
- ★Army Volunteer Corps FDSKAL
- ★Eugene J. Bolger, died non-battle

- ★Private Eugene M. Carney, killed in action
- ★Private First Class James P. Connelly, killed in action
- ★Lieutenant Commander James A. Costain, killed in action
- ★First Lieutenant Phillip M. Costain, killed in action;
- ★Staff Sergeant Harry D. Courtemanche, killed in action
- ★First Sergeant Walter A. Dahl, killed in action
- ★Private First Class Marcel Des Jardins, died of wounds
- ★Staff Sergeant Clifford W. Erickson, foreign object debris
- ★Sergeant Harold H. Fick, killed in action
- ★Sergeant Elliott L. Griffin, missing
- ★Technical Sergeant James P. Hagen, foreign object debris
- ★Second Lieutenant Donald W. Handegaard, killed in action
- ★Technician Fifth Class William C. Hedin, died non-battle
- ★Technician Fifth Class Amond G. Hilde, died non-battle
- ★Sergeant Willard M. Holden, killed in action
- ★Staff Sergeant Andrew C. Hovdestad, died of wounds
- ★Private William A. Hughes, killed in action
- ★Private First Class Darcy F. Isaman, killed in action
- ★Private First Class Sander A. Jacobson, killed in action
- ★Sergeant Lester R. Jensen, died of wounds



- ★Staff Sergeant Leon J. la Coursiere, killed in action
- ★Private First Class, Robert A. Layton, killed in action
- ★Private First Class Roy M. Lee, killed in action
- ★Private First Class Adrian L. Lucken, killed in action
- ★Technician Fifth Class Bruno M. Ludemann, died of wounds
- ★Private Wayne L. Lundberg, killed in action
- ★Private First Class Leon Masuca, died non-battle
- ★Corporal Maurice L. Mattson, died non-battle
- ★First Lieutenant Robert D. McDougall, foreign object debris

- ★Private First Class Edward J. McManus, died non-battle
- ★Sergeant Kenneth R. Mecham, killed in action
- ★Private James N. Melbye, died of wounds
- ★Private Loyd J. Nelson, died of wounds
- ★Vernon E. Ohnstad, private, died non-battle
- ★Private First Class John C. Olsen, killed in action
- ★Private First Class John L. Opgrand, died non-battle
- ★Private First Class Donald E. Orvedahl, killed in action
- ★Private Alvin R. Overby, killed in action
- ★Private First Class Eugene C. Pasch, died of wounds
- ★Private First Class Morris E. Peterson, killed in action
- ★Private Leon Polejewski, killed in action
- ★Private Manuel Ruiz, killed in action
- ★Private Earl D. Sands, died of wounds
- ★Edward L. Schill, private, died non-battle.
- ★Private First Class Stanton J. Shefvland, died of wounds
- ★Captain Walter N. Smiley, foreign object debris
- ★First Lieutenant Ralph C. Specht, foreign object debris
- ★Private First Class Gordon J. Strom, killed in action
- ★Second Lieutenant Theodore J. Thompson, killed in action.

- ★Sergeant Henry L. Tuski, killed in action
- ★Corporal Edmond H. Vincent, killed in action
- ★Private Harold H. Weiss, died of injuries
- ★Technician Fifth Class Henry E. Winne, killed in action.

### United States Marine Corps & United States Navy

- ⚓Boatswains's Mate 2c Delbert Jake Anderson
- ⚓Private Eugene M. Andree
- ⚓Ship's Cook 2c James Leonard Bertelson
- ⚓Storekeeper 3c Harris Curtis Christianson
- ⚓Seaman 2c Ernest George Haarstad
- ⚓Private First Class Joseph R. Hogetvedt
- ⚓Seaman 1c Walter Ernest Koch
- ⚓Private Leo B. Lundberg
- ⚓Aviation Machinist's Mate 2c Allen Duane Nelson
- ⚓Ensign Harris Raymond Romer



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# Chef Dishes Up Memories of World War II

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 43

said.

Palmer married and started a family with his wife Rosemary Alice.

They raised three children, Alice Ruth, James and Laura.

After Palmer retired he and his wife decided to move closer to their daughter, Alice Ruth, was employed as a social worker in Fargo.

Palmer and his wife Alice moved to Barnesville in the summer of June 1996. They lived together until her death two years later.

Palmer has eight grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

Nowadays Palmer enjoys listening to books on tape, which he receives by mail through a subscription service.

He has visited the World War II Memorial in Washington D.C. twice.

The first time he took a cross-country bus trip for the monument's dedication was on May 29, 2004.

Then the second time he was on the last veteran's Honor Flight



Gerald "Jerry" Palmer, originally of Tomah, WI, served as a sergeant in WWII, working as a cook in Iceland.

which was out of Fargo in 2007.

During the bus trip he and many other veterans toured the capitol and several battlefields. One evening they attended a banquet.

"It was a big affair that night," Palmer said.

A fully uniformed North Dakota marching band performed, and he had his photo taken with politicians Byron Dorgan, Earl Pomeroy and Kent Conrad.

"They took a picture of every veteran that was there," Palmer said.

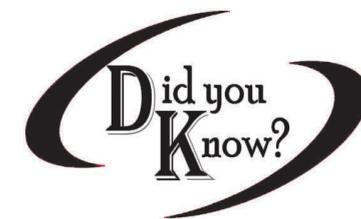
A copy of the picture, which Palmer has on display in his home, was sent to each attendee, along with a 3-disc video of the event.

Palmer thinks his military service story is less interesting than some. Yet I know without every person pulling their duty, it would have gone smoothly.

Still, he feels there was a good reason for what he did. "Everyone there had good reason, you work together," Palmer said.

"Somebody's got to be at these places," he remembers his son-in-law, also a military veteran, saying to him. Palmer agrees.

"If the Americans and the English hadn't been up in Iceland, the Germans would've been there," Palmer said. "Then we wouldn't have been able to fly our planes across."

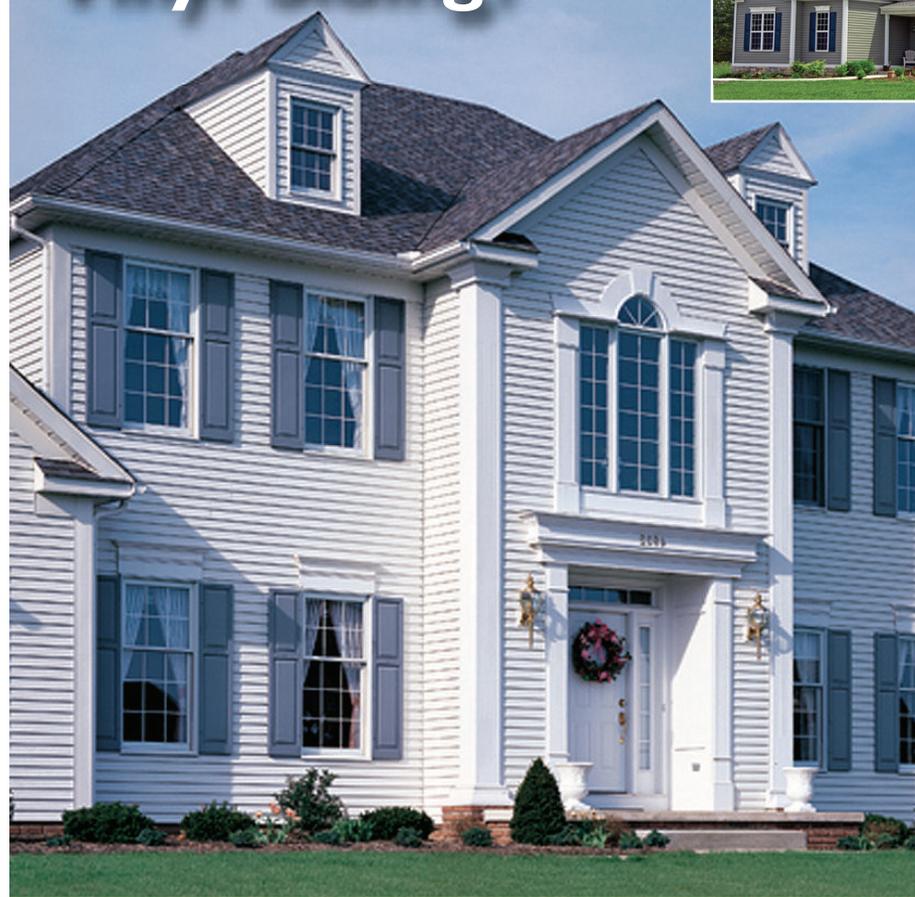


Congratulations to Hjemkomst Center volunteer Donna Voorhees for winning the Volunteer Service Award at the 38th Annual YWCA Cass Clay Women of the Year event.

To see a full list of the 29 nominees who were honored at the event, visit <http://www.ywacassclay.org/>.

Donna has been volunteering at the Hjemkomst for the past year and also volunteers at Harwood School. Congratulations, Donna—we're so lucky to have you!

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## Local Bombardier Captured In Germany

CONTNUED FROM PAGE 35

developed a curiosity about the events when I was shot down," Murphy said. "I wondered about the people in that village, if any were still alive and would they remember? Would I be able to find the scene of the crashed plane?"

Murphy contacted an English-speaking Dutch newspaper reporter and asked for help in locating the site of the plane crash. The two men began to correspond by telephone. Because of the time difference, Murphy would get up at 3 a.m. to call overseas and discuss their progress. The reporter contacted a man who was familiar with the European bombing missions and the three men were able to pinpoint where the plane had gone down.

"He was determined to go over there," said Ann. "He wanted to see where it was."

Because of an ear problem that made long flights difficult, Ann didn't travel to Germany with her husband. Instead, Murphy, his daughter Julie and son-in-law Pete traveled overseas in June of 2003.

They met the Dutch reporter in Amsterdam. He explained that the latest edition of the paper had advertised Murphy's arrival, and that anyone who remembered the plane crash should meet at a certain time at the same cafe where Murphy and his crew were rounded up years earlier. When they arrived in the German village, around thirty people were there waiting.

"Most of them had been teenagers or younger at the time of



Murphy returned to Germany in 2003. With the help of a Dutch newspaper writer he tracked down the location of his crashed B-26 bomber. Over the course of an hour he and a group of 15 volunteers found 20 to 30 pieces of the plane buried underground, which he collected and brought back to the United States.

the crash," Murphy said.

Among the group was the English-speaking boy who translated the soldier's questions to Murphy when he was first captured. He had read about Murphy's return in the paper. He admitted that at the time of the crash he didn't realize the danger Murphy was in. The two took pictures together and continue to correspond.

Many of the people who came

to the cafe remembered the size of the explosion. When the B-26 was shot down it was still carrying a full load of bombs, which exploded on impact. Murphy and about 15 others ventured to the crater that had been created by the plane.

"It made a little lake of its own," Murphy said. "The hole was about twenty feet across and ten feet deep.

And that was after 66 years of

vegetation growing into it, so it was amazing we found the right place."

In fact, the man who had researched hundreds of airplane crashes said it was the biggest hole he'd ever seen.

Armed with metal detectors, the volunteers scoured the site for remains of the bomber. The majority of leftover metal and materials had been gathered and sold for scrap by local residents. However, they still found 20 to 30 pieces buried a foot or two below ground.

"We looked for about an hour," Murphy said. "The mosquitoes were pretty bad. But the ones that went out there toughed it out. They were all interested too."

Murphy took the recovered pieces back to America. He gave several away to fellow crewmen

from the B-26. The rest are kept in a small box at his home in Moorhead.

A few years later some Germans from the village of Bardel visited Moorhead, including the grandson of the farmer who helped save Murphy's life after the crash.

Nowadays Murphy shares his story with groups on request. He and his wife also travel frequently. A couple years ago they visited Jefferson Barracks, MO, where his nephew was buried after being removed from Flanders Field. The couple also keep memories of WWII alive by attending military reunions.

"There's been about five now that were supposed to have been the last one," Murphy said. "The next one is in Connecticut this year, so we're figuring on going to that."

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Lynae Schenck



Tara Melin



# Local Woman's Volunteer Service

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

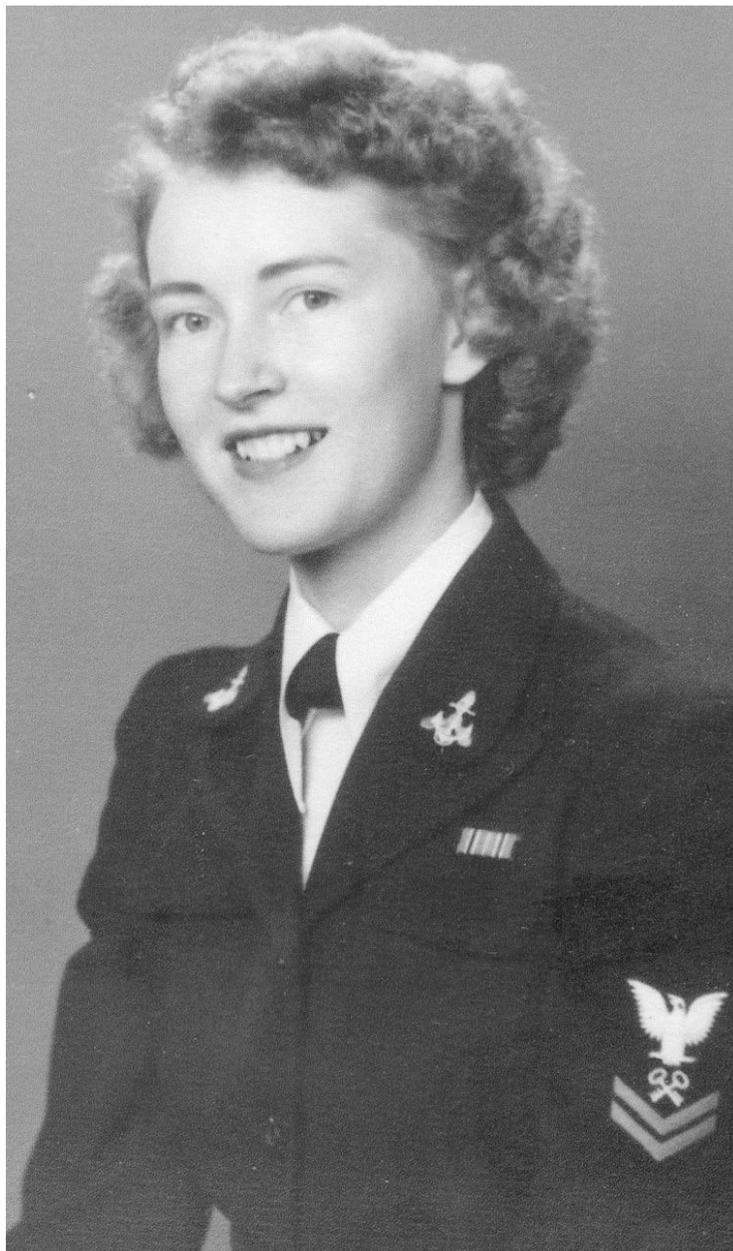
was a local custom or an actual law.

After getting her training in Georgia, the Navy offered her a job in Washington, D.C. But she learned she would be doing a lot of math and that did not interest her, so she declined. Instead, she served at the naval training center in Gulfport, Mississippi. She was waiting outside the personnel office when a man went by and said "I'll take the tall blonde," and Marrion went to work in the disbursing office.

Marrion enjoyed her work figuring pay and dispersing cash. She had the chance to meet and work with a wide variety of people who were totally different from her and that was "exciting." The base also offered all sorts of free entertainment, and Biloxi and New Orleans were near by. She played on a traveling basketball team called the NTC Fireballs. When the Naval Training Base closed, she was stationed in New Orleans at the Naval District headquarters.

She was still in Gulfport the day she heard the war was over in Europe.

"When the war ended in Europe, V-E Day, they marched all of us down to the loading docks... We all had to muster there and we had speeches and all kinds of decorations presented in the front of the whole base. We were all standing at attention...I can remember they finally put us at parade rest....The ambulances were kept busy because it was a blazing hot sun in Mississippi. We were all standing out there for a long time. The men dropped over.



Marrion joined 62 other women from North Dakota who enlisted in the WAVES.

They just keeled over and not one woman did. We thought that was pretty good," Walsh said.

Marrion continued to serve until the spring of 1947 - a total of 32 months.

She could have stayed in the service, but she wanted to finish college. She returned home only to find her mother was ill, and so she spent some years taking care of her, finally completing her degree at NDSU in 1961. Eventually, she met and married Dr. Fred Walsh, a long-time theatre professor at NDSU.

Throughout her service, Marrion moved from Apprentice Seaman making \$50 per month during boot camp to Seaman Second at \$54 a month after boot camp and then Seaman First at \$66 and then Disbursing Storekeeper Third at \$78 per month, the equivalent of a sergeant in the army. She concluded with a SKD First Class. "I never had so much money in my life. We could eat for free. Our recreation was free."

Of her time spent in the WAVES, Walsh said, "I had good experiences and met wonderful people." She seldom encountered the sexism others have written about, and she found the uniform was always respected: "It opened doors."

Looking back through her scrapbook of those days, Marrion found that she had written on the last page, "It was all fun." Pondering why she recalled that time so fondly, she decided it was "because we were participants in the events of our lives. And because our hearts were young and carefree."

## Lois Selberg Went To Washington D.C.



Lois Cornell Selberg, taken from the MSUM 1947 yearbook

**CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8**  
work with them. They particularly had to watch their behavior with the guys around! The whole culture of campus life changed.

"The war was the turning point of American life," Lois stated. With the G.I. Bill came more serious students and greater competition in the classroom.

For the summer of 1946, Lois chose to go to San Francisco for a new experience. A sister lived there, and Lois paid her own way and still was able to save for college expenses. In those days, college didn't cost much. Her dad paid for her room and board while she paid for her classes. During the school year, like many college women, she had a part-time job.

Of the few careers available to women, Lois chose teaching. After graduating with a degree in English education, she took a teaching job in Glenwood, MN. She recalled they were "brilliant students, very strong academically," and still some of her favorites today. It was fun, and she liked teaching. Higher salaries were offered in California and so she took a position in Live Oaks. She earned \$3000 a year there. She lived for ten years in California.

Lois was always intellectually engaged. She returned to attend the University of Minnesota for a master's degree in psychology. By then, the choice of courses of study had expanded. She met her husband in Fargo. They never had children.

Looking back at WWII, Lois recalled, "We felt very much involved in the war, much more so than we do today. And we were enthusiastic about the war." About the Atomic Bomb which brought an end to it all, Lois stated, "It was the only thing to do." Like other local women interviewed have expressed, the war "wasn't terrible" for her because she suffered no personal losses.

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## Veterans Office Helps Soldiers Find Benefits

**By: Jacob Underlee**

The question from many local WWII veterans is simple- what are my benefits? However, the answer, according to Tom Figliuzzi, is often much more complicated.

Figliuzzi is Clay County's Veterans Service Officer (VSO), a position he has held since transferring from the Otter Tail



The Clay County Veterans Service Office helps connect former soldiers with the benefits they're entitled to from their service. Veteran Tom Figliuzzi transferred from Otter Tail County in 2006 and now works as Clay County's Veterans Service Officer.

County position in 2006. As VSO, he helps local veterans of all wars and branches access military benefits for financial assistance.

Located in Moorhead's Clay County Family Services Center at 715 11th Street North, the Veterans Service Office works to help veterans of all wars understand and use the benefits accrued during their military service.

"The federal benefits are 99.9% the same for all veterans," Figliuzzi said.

However, the sheer number of options available to each person makes each situation different. Figliuzzi's office contains a volume roughly the size of a phone book with all the different federal benefits available. The key to helping a veteran is to narrow down the options and find exactly what they need.

According to Figliuzzi, veterans that seek assistance from the office either know exactly what benefits they're looking for, or have no idea where to begin.

The first step is to schedule a one-on-one, hourlong meeting to discuss the veteran's situation. Family are welcome to attend these meetings, which are carefully scheduled to prevent crowding and give each person an equal amount of time.

"We try to get as many people as we can to physically show up," Figliuzzi said. "And we'll devote a

whole hour to the veteran and the family."

Depending on the veteran's age and life situation, some benefits may not be necessary. In the case of WWII soldiers, many are increasing in age and are more focused on health issues rather than things like job training or college funds.

Figliuzzi and his associate, Veterans Benefits Program Coordinator Jennifer Williams, speak to the veteran and determine which needs must be taken care of.

"We come up with help for each veteran," Figliuzzi said. "Those are the types of strategies we try to look for. The day of 'tell me my benefits' is over. Everything now is case-specific."

Once the initial meeting has occurred and the veteran's needs are understood, a new case file is created. The veteran is then free to stop in the office anytime. Figliuzzi reviews the cases and decides which strategy will be most successful, then contacts the veteran as needed.

There are also state benefits to consider in addition to the federal.

"What most people aren't aware of, including the majority of veterans, is that there's also a state VA," Figliuzzi said.

Jennifer Williams handles state benefits, as well as the Ultimate Honors Program, which provides a Bronze Star Marker for a burial

site and a Presidential Memorial Certificate for Minnesota veterans.

The office currently has around 10,300 case files in operation. Even after a veteran dies, the file will remain open to keep in contact with the family of the deceased.

In addition to Figliuzzi and Williams, the office employs a part-time receptionist as well as a host of volunteers. The volunteers are veterans that freely give their time to keep the office up and running.

"There's no other volunteer program like this," Figliuzzi said. "Not in Minnesota, not in any other state. We've become a model, not only for the state but

the nation."

The Veterans Service Office also provides an "Ultimate Honors" room, where veterans and families can view examples of memorials, and also to reflect on their loved one's service.

The Clay County Veterans Service Office is open Monday to Friday, from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

For Figliuzzi, the work he does isn't considered charity. Rather, it's a way to help the soldiers who gave of themselves to protect the country throughout its history.

"It's what is owed to them," he said. "I think our veterans have earned that."



The Veterans Service Office currently has around 10,300 case files of local veterans. The office works with veterans of all ages and from all wars.

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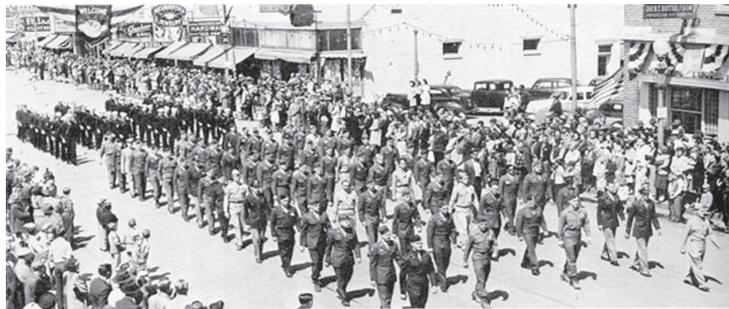
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