



# THE LEGION POST

OTIS SAMPSON POST 59 STOUGHTON, WI  
POST WEB SITE: POST59.ORG POST PHONE: 608.205.9090



VOLUME 13 ISSUE 12

DECEMBER 2011

## Commander's Report

### 2011-2012 OFFICERS

#### Commander

Sonny Swangstu

#### 1st Vice Commander

Steve Grady

#### 2nd Vice Commander

Larry Ambrose

#### 3rd Vice Commander

John Christopherson

#### Service Officer

Dan Call

#### Sgt. at Arms

Ken Schieldt

#### Finance Officer

Don Helmke

#### Historian

Odean Teigen

#### Adjutant

Dennis Rodenkirch

#### Judge Advocate

Terry McCardle

#### Chaplain

Monte Whitford



Greeting Comrades,

Let's start the article by introducing a couple of new members to the Post, Greg Jenson of Stoughton and Richard Fries of Edgerton. Welcome both of you and glad you joined our great organization.

Our addition is coming along quite well. We did run into a problem with the sewer hookup and had to run it along the side of our building from the front to the back. Also, we went through our allotment of funding as we did more than we had originally planned to do. Adding the sewer lateral and plumbing put us over the top. We had to get permission from you (the Post), to use more from the general fund along with other donations from Pat Nowlin and the

Honor Guard to help finish up.

With the raffle coming up, those funds will pay back a good share of the loan we received from the Post. Which reminds me, our raffle will be under way as I write this? Only 200 tickets will be available, so please sign up soon. Prizes are \$300 to \$1,700 with our drawing to be in December. Good luck!

Dennis Rodenkirch, our membership chairman states we have a number of members who haven't paid their dues as of yet. Please remit if you haven't already, or if there is a problem, contact Dennis.

This next thank you is long overdue. The lady quilters who have been sewing at our Post for the past several years for the VA Hospital have created 52 quilts again this year. They were beautiful and involved many hours of work. The Post and Auxiliary donate funds for this project, but they are always looking for more material or a small donation would be helpful. Thank you ladies again for a job well done!

Friday night fish fry is going well. The

hours are 5:00-8:00 pm for a very good, reasonable meal. We sure could use some kitchen help if you could spare a few hours during that time. The ladies take care of the waitressing and it would be nice if the men would help out in the kitchen. Please call Sonny or Linda if you could help out.

The Post and Auxiliary is thinking about an auction after the holidays for a fund-raiser. If you have any goods to donate, please contact us and we will let you know when we will be starting to collect them. It will be a fun time for everyone.

Next month's Post dinner will be pork tenderloin night and it will be on the second Tuesday, December 13.

Happy Thanksgiving,

Commander Sonny

### Auxiliary

#### President

Linda Swangstu

873-9428

#### Vice President

Karen Whitford

873-4020

#### Secretary

Lisa Olson – 873-8924

#### Treasurer

Lynn Robertson

873-4889

#### Chaplain

Marlene Bierman

873-7397

#### Sgt. at Arms

Mary Copley

873-5804

#### Historian

Kathy Teigen

873-7518

#### Membership

Lisa Olson – 873-8924

#### Junior Leader

Jona Chat – 622-4574

## Auxiliary News



Hello to all,

I am writing this article with a sad heart, our dear friend and devoted eight-year (PULF) member Kay Voigt has passed away from cancer. She has been called to the High Command. We will always cherish her memory.

It is time again to let our Legion families know they should be thinking about scholarships for any senior high school students that would be interested in applying through the American Legion or Auxiliary. Applicants must present a completed application packet to our Unit #59 on or before March 1, 2012. Please call Linda (873-9428) for more information. Applicant must be a daughter, son, stepdaughter, stepson, wife, or widow of a veteran: (granddaughters, grandsons, great-granddaughters, step granddaughters, step grandsons, step great-granddaughters, and step great-grandsons) of a VI American Legion Auxiliary member. A non-traditional student (that means, going back to school after years of being out of school) can also qualify.

Please note the flyer in the newsletter regarding the VFW Christmas Dinner. The Auxiliary has been asked to provide some deserts for the dinner. You may bring them the day before or in the morning before 11:00 at the VFW on

December 25. Any kind of help would be greatly appreciated by all!

I have heard excellent reviews with regard to the AARP Driver Safety Program class. I believe all seniors could use a brush up on our driving habits. There are some new rules since we took our test many moons ago. See the poster in the newsletter for information.

Now that the holidays are coming and many families are struggling financially, we need to put them in our thoughts when it comes to giving. The joy of giving brings a good feeling in the heart. Many of us have more than we need of material things. We tend to use the holidays for accumulating more stuff. Let us talk to our families and set a new tradition this year. Give to the needy, if just one little item. Teach your children the true meaning of Christmas. Our food basket at the Post has been filling up pretty regularly, so keep up the good work. I can usually bring a basket full once a month to the food pantry. The pantry is in real need and every time I go there, the shelves are never full. Let's make December an especially super month and have that basket overflowing with food and love for our fellowman.

Thank you and have a wonderful turkey day!

Linda  
Auxiliary President

## CALENDER OF EVENTS

November 19 - 7:00 pm – 11:00 pm  
 Northern Lights Band (50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary  
 for Monte & Karen Whitford)  
 November 20 - Breakfast – Legion  
 7:00 am – 11:00 am  
 November 24 - Thanksgiving  
 November 26 - 7:00 pm – 11:00 pm  
 Rotation Band  
 December 10 - Northern Lights  
 7:00 – 11:00 pm  
 December 13 - Legion Dinner - 6:30 pm

### Event Pricing

Post Dinner: 6:30 pm \$11.00

Breakfast: 7:00-11:30 am  
 \$7.00 adults, \$4.00 children

The American Juniors have been working on projects for the American Legion breakfasts. During breakfast on December 18, the Juniors will be having a bake and craft sale. On December 17 the Juniors will be meeting at Jona Chat's bake for the sale. The time is 1:00-5:00 pm. We would like to thank Hyvee for donating the baking supplies. Cupcakes, brownies, Rice Krispie Treats and Caterpillars, Puppy Chow, and Chex Mix will be made. We hope to have a great sale. The Juniors have been working on other projects such as star door hangers and magnets that have sayings on the stars as well as patriotic bracelets and others. The Juniors would like to create a patriotic quilt starting in January.

*Jona Chat*  
*Juniors Leader*



## CHAPLAINS CORNER

Luckily the news letter is running late this month, otherwise there would not be a Chaplain article. The last month or so have been so unreal for me I'm fortunate to have made this deadline.

We sold our Stoughton house mid-October and moved in with our daughter and two granddaughters in Waunakee after putting our furniture in storage until we could close on our new house in Janesville, which we thought would be for a week, perhaps two at the most. As it turned out we didn't close on the Janesville house until November 8th almost a month later.

While we enjoyed our time spent in Waunakee with Penny and the girls, being more-less homeless for a month was quite an experience. We were sure taken well care of, fed like kings—put on a few pounds—spoiled by both Penny and the girls. We really got to know them. On the other hand, we taught them how to play Rummy and euchre as well as other card games. At seven o'clock one morning our granddaughter wanted to play rummy. This was even before Karen had her first cup of coffee!

This was an experience we will be ever grateful to Penny and the girls for, one that in some ways was humbling, an experience that drew us closer to them and to God, and an experience we may all go through as we age. When we are separated from what we know as normal, we must have the trust and knowledge that God is there with us.

May all of us put our trust in God!

Monte

*If you know of anyone who is hospitalized, or in need please contact Monte at 873-4020.*

**Donald L. Heiliger**  
**Colonel, USAF, (ret.)**  
 (Part 2)

**The first year in captivity – 1967-68**

The three cellmates spent much of the day and early evening talking about every subject in the world. They told jokes and stories about themselves. After a few weeks they realized that they had told most of what they knew or remembered. So they would delve further into their personal background until they had told each other most of their own very personal history. There is little about Bill and John that Don doesn't know.

During the week, they usually would be called out for an interrogation or two. Don thinks some of these times were for the English speakers to practice. At other times it was to administer some form of punishment for their behavior. A common punishment was a beating by the guards (which was inflicted almost daily at the guard's discretion). A favorite form of punishment/torture was being put on their knees directly on the cement floor with hands-up for extended periods—sometimes several days—very painful to the knees and tiring to the arms (try it sometime!).

Some days, the guard would let them out into the courtyard to do "yard work". The Vietnamese didn't seem to like green grass so they would be assigned to pick the grass in their cell area down to brown dirt. Although officers do not have to accept work (according to the Geneva Convention), the three enjoyed getting outside the cells to get some fresh air. After all, the outside summer temperatures were very high and the cells had but one high window with very poor circulation resulting in stifling hot inside temperatures.

Communication was very important and Don learned the "tap" code from Bill and John. They could tap on the walls between cells and when outside working, they could sweep in code.

The North Vietnamese rotated the Americans among cells regularly. In Don's cell area there was the "officer", which had cells for 20 or the "zoo annex", which had 10 cells for 9 men each. "Roommates" were changed often. Don normally moved with Bill and John. In fact, the three lived together for about 2 years straight. In their time in the zoo annex, John was working on an escape plan—to escape from the building through the roof (adobe tiles) with another Captain, a reconnaissance pilot named Ed Atterbury. John and Ed worked on their plan for most of the second year. In May 1969, they were ready as they could be. They requested permission of the senior officer of the zoo annex (Capt. Konnie Trautman), and the two left the building (and Don's room) about midnight (during a rainstorm) on May 15, 1969.

**Recapture and torture for all**

The zoo annex was made up of 10 buildings, each building containing two cells holding nine prisoners in each. John and Ed climbed onto the sub-roof and then out through the roof and into the main yard, finally getting over the wall of the compound. They were free for four or five hours before being recaptured shortly before dawn. The two were tortured and interrogated for several days. Ed is listed as dying about three days later. Then the Vietnamese started on the remaining POWs. The torture was brutal—worse than the initial torture to include numerous beatings, cutting circulation, broken ear drums, etc. The Vietnamese wanted to know about internal communication and future plans for escape—including everything about the current escape plans. This was a horribly painful time lasting several weeks.

But, the Americans survived and all got back together in similar rooms in the zoo annex, although often with different cellmates. The several weeks of torture had left many aches and they lived through it. A year or so later, the Vietnamese moved about 100 of the prisoners to a camp about 45-50 miles west of Hanoi. They were placed in various sized rooms. Suddenly they had new cellmates—new stories, jokes, news from home, etc., from newer shoot downs.

They set up education classes and taught Spanish, French and German—all from memory as the Vietnamese never provided any books or educational material. Don taught a 20 hour music appreciation course and at release brought back to the U.S. an outline of his course, written on sheets of toilet paper by fellow cellmate, Ken Cordier. Other classes included social dancing and how to ski and golf. Of course, one could imagine what the "sport equipment" looked like!

*Continued on page 6*





## Veterans Day Membership Incentive Drawing Winner

Three-hundred-eight of our members paid by Veterans Day and had their names entered into the \$100 drawing. The lucky winner is Bill Muether. Bill donated the \$100 to the Legion Riders end-of-the-year party. The Legion Riders party is at our Post so the money will indirectly come back to us. Thank you to Bill for donating the money back.

We still have work to do. We need 350 members to be 100%. That means we need 42 more of our friends to pay their dues. If you are one of the 58, please pay as soon as you can so we can focus on our current programs and projects.

Currently we are working on the building addition, County Government Days, and Badger Boys State as well as our usual projects: monthly dinner, breakfast, and funeral honors. We need you to pay and allow us to focus on what we all do best... Veterans and Community Support.

We all joined the Legion for a reason. Was your reason to reconnect with other veterans, to support your community, to support local veterans, or to ensure that the future generations remember what we have all done for them? Whatever the reason, your financial support continues to allow us to do what you wanted when you joined.

Thank you to those who have already paid.

Mary Lloyd  
Membership Team Member

## UNIT 59 AUXILIARY MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

**THANK YOU** to all of our Auxiliary Members who have paid their 2012 Dues! As of today we have 118 renewed and new members. We currently have a total of 133 Members so only 15 members are left to renew. For 2012 we need to have 130 paid members in order to reach the 100% goal set for us by Department. That means that if only 12 more members could pay, we would be at 100%! For the last eight years we have been recognized every spring as the one unit in the 3rd District (56 counties) to be highest over the 100% goal for the most consecutive years. Let's try to make it nine!

**WELCOME** to nine new Senior members who have joined our ranks within the last year: Michelle Christensen, Lisa Dewey, Linda Dzeiciol, Amy Hermes, Debra Horvath, Sandy Lynch, Marie Matejka, Tamara Quam, Marno Stellmacher. In addition we welcomed two Junior members: Elin Benecke and Josie Silbaugh. And, thanks to the members who invited them to join us.

During the last year we have lost three of our members. Please remember in your prayers, Agnes Green, Mildred Stiff, and Louise Williams.


Several members have reached a milestone year and we would like to recognize and congratulate them for their continuous years of membership:

- 10 Years: Pam Griggs, Ruth Wilson, Tanya Cohen, Annique Cohen-Wichner, Patsy Day, and Rae Stelzer.
- 15 Years: Emily Mogden
- 30 Years: Michelle McCrossen and Sueann Young
- 50 Years: Catherine Mogden

If you or anyone you know might be interested in joining the Auxiliary please feel free to give me a call.

Lisa Olson  
Auxiliary Membership Chairperson  
608-873-8924

AARP Driver Safety Program



**Attention veterans, military personnel and your families**

NOVEMBER IS VETERAN'S MONTH!  
TAKE THE DSP COURSE AT NO CHARGE!

(Includes widows, widowers, spouses and children)

non-qualifying AARP members \$12, non AARP members \$14

**The AARP Driver Safety Program Class:**

- the nation's first and largest improvement course for drivers
- open to AARP members and non-members alike
- no tests are given
- presented in a 4 hour classroom setting
- upon completion of the course, attendee is awarded a certificate

Attendees may qualify for a worthwhile multi-year auto insurance discount by completing this course. Please check with your insurance company.

TO BE HELD AT

American Legion Post #59  
803 N. Page Street, Stoughton

<for reservation call: 608-575-9444>

DATE Nov. 29, 2011 12:30 pm to 4:30 pm

## AMERICAN LEGION BAR 803 N. Page St. Stoughton, WI

Open to the Public

**Bar open to serve you Wednesday - Sunday**

**Wednesday & Thursday: 3 – p pm or later**

**Friday: 3 – 10 pm or later**

**Saturday: Noon – 10 pm or later**

**Sunday: 11:30 am – 6 pm or later**

**Wednesday Ladies Night**

**\$.50 off any Ladies drinks**



The Madison Navy League invites you to our  
**End of the year Social and Silent Auction**  
*December 10, 2011*



On Saturday, December 10, the Madison Navy League celebrates the Army-Navy game with our annual end-of-the-year social and silent auction at the Coliseum Bar, 232 Olin Ave. in Madison.



**Game Time!** Watch the Midshipmen take on the Black Knights with fellow Navy League members and friends. Enjoy the Coliseum Bar's famous hospitality, our silent auction, raffles and good conversation.

**Support a worthy cause...** Our silent auction features autographed Brewer and Packer items, autographed golf items from Jerry Kelly & Steve Stricker as well as items from great area businesses all to benefit Madison Navy League programs including: Badger Honor Flight, Operation Military Kids and local youth programs.



**Where:** The Coliseum Bar,  
232 Olin Ave., Madison 53713  
<http://www.coliseumbarmadison.com/>

**When:** Silent Auctions begin: 1300 (1:00 p.m.) CST  
Game Kickoff 1330 (1:30 p.m.) CST

**More Details** at: [www.MadisonNavyLeague.org](http://www.MadisonNavyLeague.org)

**This event is free and open to the public.**

## MADISON NAVY LEAGUE

*Citizens in support of the sea services*  
**[MadisonNavyLeague.org](http://MadisonNavyLeague.org)**

Membership in Navy League is open to any U.S. Citizen with an interest in our sea services

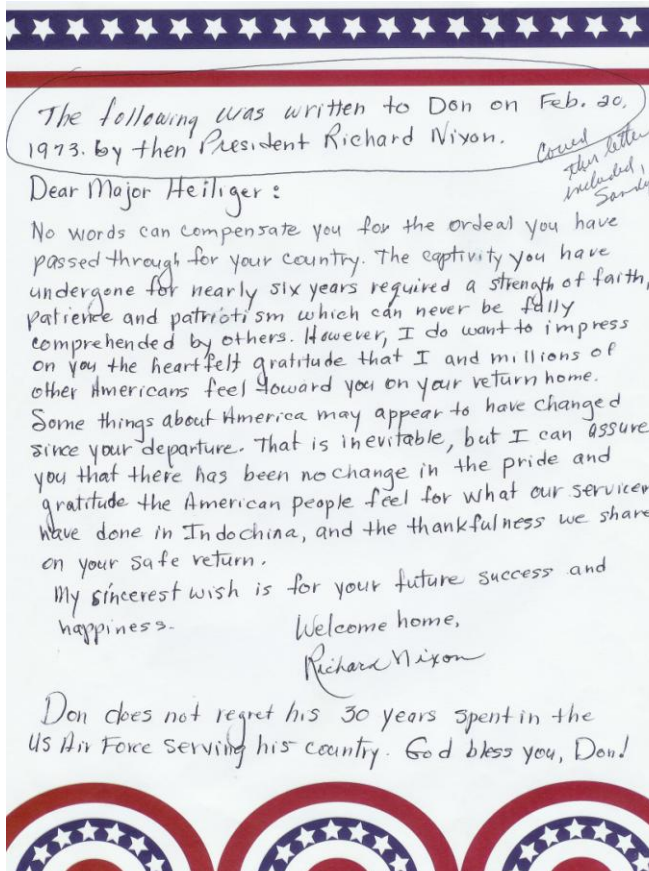


*"Navy League events take you behind the scenes of the Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard and Merchant Marine"*

Continued from page 3

### Mail and packages

After 2½ years Don received his first package from home—a two pound box of Fannie Farmer chocolates sent by his parents. No notes or writing, just the candy—of course they knew that Don loved chocolate. Some of the POWs were getting short letters from home. Don received no written news until almost four years after his shoot down—a seven-line letter from his parents. Don had written several six-line or seven-line letters to his wife and parents. He never received a letter from his wife or children. Only his parents wrote to him. Although Don and his wife were having marital difficulties at the time of his shoot down, Don still finds it hard to believe anyone could ever be so heartless as to not even write a short letter in these circumstances. Finally a letter from his parents in late 1972, toward the end of the incarceration, indicated that his wife Carol had gone ahead with her plans to obtain a divorce and begin a new life. Divorce or other civil justice action is not permitted by U.S. law against any serviceman serving overseas, but Don was still not sure what Carol had done with her plans.



### Release and home

The Paris Peace Accords were signed on January 27, 1973. The Accords provided for four equal releases in two months beginning in early February 1973. Don was in a special group of 20 released between the first and second groups. Don was released in the second contingent. This group included those who had some medical difficulties or problems like divorces, etc. On February 18, 1973, the 20 in his group lined up at Gia Lam airport in Hanoi. The names were read and each walked individually to a waiting escort officer and into a USAF C-141 (the "Hanoi Taxi"). The C-141 flew directly to Clark AB in the Philippines where they were met about midnight by over 3,000 people. What a welcome—unbelievable! Almost immediately each of them was put in contact with relatives in the USA by phone. Don found out for sure in talking with his parents that Carol had, in fact, divorced him and remarried. The first meals were great and all chowed-down. A first night's sleep in freedom...WOW!

The 20 were given current uniforms and several days of rest at Clark AB, then on to the States with a stop in Hawaii on the way. In San Francisco, they switched aircraft and Ed Mechenbier and Don flew in a C-9 to Wright-Patterson AFB in Dayton, OH, arriving just before midnight. Ed's relatives and Don's parents were at the airport along with a lot of press and well wishers. Don's former wife, Carol and three children (Jim, Barrie and Leslie) were also waiting in a nearby car but did not step out of the auto. They drove to the hospital and talked more of the night. Don spent several months in the hospital at Wright-Patterson AFB, including a rhinoplasty operation on his nose. Don's parents left for Madison, WI a few days later. Don was flown to Madison in a USAF T-39 about two weeks later for a long weekend to meet the press and spend a weekend at his parent's home for a restful time.

To be continued next issue





**CRESS**  
FUNERAL & CREMATION SERVICE  
SINCE 1869



BCress@CressFuneralService.com

**DUNK/RK ELECTRIC**  
Your "Local" Electrical Contractor  
With Over 30 Years Experience  
Free Estimates  
Senior and Veterans Discount  
Fully Insured • Prompt and Expert Service



(608) 873-3531  
(608) 575-8387 Cell

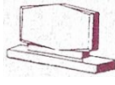
Thomas M. Fendrick  
Financial Advisor

**Edward Jones**  
MAKING SENSE OF INVESTING



2368 Jackson St.  
Stoughton, WI 53589  
Bus. 608-873-8502 TF Fax 877-222-4313  
TF, 888-873-8550  
www.edwardjones.com

Local Representative  
Stoughton &  
Surrounding Area



**Myron Sime**  
Consultant  
Res. (608) 873-9290

**ARCHIE MONUMENTS INC**  
Since 1865

P.O. Box 10  
Watertown, WI 53094

Main Office/Showroom  
2 Miles South of  
Watertown on Hwy. 26  
1-800-242-9519

*True Value.*  
Help Is Just Around The Corner.

**WHERE ALL YOUR RENTAL  
NEEDS ARE MET**

1415 Hwy. 51-138  
Stoughton, WI 53589  
608-873-3161

**GIS** Greater Insurance Service

917 E. Main St.  
Stoughton, WI 53589

**JULIE F. NYGAARD**

Office: 608-873-5617 Toll Free: 800-747-4472  
Fax: 608-221-0484 E-mail: julien@greaterinsurance.com

**HOME**  
SavingsBank

*There's no bank like Home!*

400 W. Main Street  
Stoughton

 home-savings.com 282.6160

Hanson Electronics  
22-C115  
2380 Jackson St.  
Stoughton, WI 53589  
608-877-9548

Hanson Electronics  
22-C403  
613 E. Main St.  
Evanville, WI 53536  
608-882-0680

   **RadioShack**  
A Division of Tandy Corporation

**Stoughton Collision Center** Inc.

140 West Street



✓ Frame & Unibody Repair  
✓ Insurance Work  
✓ Show Quality Paint Jobs  
✓ Expert Color Matching  
✓ Fiberglass Repair  
✓ Glasurit Paint

call 608.877.1907  
For computerized estimates on all makes & models Jeff Gassen

**Rural Mutual**  
Insurance Company



**Matthew Kripschack**  
CAREER AGENT  
373 W. 6th St. suite A  
Richland Center, WI 53581  
Office: 608-647-2251 • Fax: 608-647-1110  
Cell: 608-512-5766  
mkripschack@ruralins.com



**The Koffee Knp**  
Restaurant

Hours:  
Mon - Sat 5 am - 5 pm  
Sunday 5 am - 2pm  
(608) 873-6717

 **Smoke Free Environment**

**Come Join Us for Dinner**

**Gunderson**  
Funeral and Cremation Care  
*A life celebration center*

Laurie Dybevik - Pre-Planning  
Jodi Corbit, Jim Dupor, Pete Gunderson  
Dale Holzthuter, Mike Smits - Funeral Directors  
Paul Selbo, Herb Gundlach  
Larry & Sharon Ambrose - Service Assistants

## Friend of the Legion, Sponsor of the Month

**SENSIBLE  
COMPUTER  
SOLUTIONS**

**Eldon L. Anderson**  
1060 West Main St.  
Stoughton, WI 53589  
Phone: (608) 873-5134



Custom Built Computers  
Computer Repair/Tune-ups  
Hardware/Software Upgrades  
House Calls by Appointment

**Microsoft  
CERTIFIED**  
PROFESSIONAL

Email: scs.consulting@charter.net  
www.scsconsultingservice.com

OTIS SAMPSON POST 59  
PO BOX 16  
STOUGHTON WI 53589  
RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

WISCONSIN AMERICAN  
LEGION PRESS  
ASSOCIATION

NONPROFIT ORG.  
U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
STOUGHTON WI  
PERMIT NO.9

PORK TENDERLOIN  
December 13, 6:30 PM

**DEADLINE FOR ARTICLES THE 8<sup>TH</sup> OF EACH MONTH**  
VISIT THE POST WEBSITE AT [POST59.ORG](http://POST59.ORG) Post e-mail [AmericanLegionPost59@ TDS.net](mailto:AmericanLegionPost59@TDS.net)  
Editors Cliff Maerz and Tim Carter: [C\\_Maerz@msn.com](mailto:C_Maerz@msn.com)