



THE LEGION POST

OTIS SAMPSON POST 59 STOUGHTON, WI
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Volume 18 Issue 12

December 2016

Commander's Report

2016-2017 OFFICERS

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Vik Malling

2nd Vice Commander

Mary Lloyd

3rd Vice Commander

Larry Johnson

Service Officer

Bob Lloyd

Sgt. at Arms

Dale Seffens

Finance Officer

Jim Oler

Historian

Lenny Swingen

Adjutant

Bob Lloyd

Judge Advocate

Terry McCardle

Chaplain

Rich Fries



Greetings,

What a lovely fall we have had. Even though the leaves keep falling and raking never ends, it is a colorful time of the year. I could take this weather all year long.

I am in a dilemma as we are running out of time to find a replacement for our two fellows that been doing the newsletter. Tim Carter and Cliff Maerz have been doing the newsletter for more than five years and they want to move on. They have done an excellent job and we

thank them very much. If you know of a grandchild or anyone that is good with a computer please ask them to help us out. Tim would be glad to train anyone who is interested. If we get no results the newsletter will die off. I have asked for help in the last few months in our news and to no avail have I received an answer. I can't believe you would let this happen, as this informs people on what is going on at the Post.

The past monthly dinner is also in trouble. Attendance is way down and I want to know what to do to get the people to come back. If anyone has an idea or gripe, please let me know. Please, let's have some

input and ideas of what you like. December dinner is on December 13 because of the holidays. Let us see if we have enough interest to keep going. We need your help.

We hope to add a salad bar to our Friday night fish fry soon. We have also changed our fish to bigger portions for you to try. Come to the Post and support our cause. We have added a washer and dryer to our Post for the convenience of washing our towels, aprons, and the ladies Auxiliary table clothes. We shall all take turns when the laundry needs to be taken care of.

Commander continued on page 2

Auxiliary

President

Cathy Rigdon

873.5818

608.712.5312

1st Vice President

Amy Hermes

608.516.8720

2nd Vice President

Jona Chat

608.622.4574

Secretary

Lisa Olson

608.279.4847

Treasurer

Linda Schmidt

205.2517

Chaplain

Lynn Robertson

608.692.6321

Membership

Lisa Olson

608.279.4847

Bonnie Kennedy

608.669.7744

Linda Swangstu

873.9428

Auxiliary News



Greetings:

Our Auxiliary members continue to stay busy with projects, fund-raisers, and support for our veterans. This past month, our unit was well represented at the Department sponsored "In the Know" training. Members attending that training included Bonnie Kennedy, Elvera Phelps, Linda Swangstu, Linda Schmidt, Mary Curran, Lisa Olson, and me. Their training(s) always provide good information, networking, and a better understanding of the purpose, roles, and responsibilities of the Auxiliary. In addition to the training, Linda Schmidt and Lisa Olson attended the district meeting held in Verona, supporting the Badger Girls State. Bonnie

Kennedy, in usual form, put together a basket to donate at the district meeting, with proceeds going to the BGS program. Reportedly, our basket was one of the first to sell. Great job Bonnie!!!

The 3rd Annual Chicken and Biscuit Dinner, held on October 22 was once again a great success. I would like to give a special shout out to all of those who helped with the dinner, donated food items, and especially for those of you who attended the meal. Profits from that fund-raiser are earmarked for veteran's programs and community projects.

The Quilting by the River Friends quilt group displayed the quilts they made and distributed at the VA this year. Throughout the year the quilters make patriotic quilts and then distribute them at the VA, on Veterans Day to all veterans in the hospital, ER, and temporary living facility. Prior to the distribution, the quilters host a display at the Post, showing off their beautiful quilts. In addition, the ALA provided a luncheon for those who attended the display.

President continued on page 2

CALENDER OF EVENTS

November 18 - Dean's Blue Country – 7:00-10:00 pm
 November 20 - Legion Breakfast – 7:30-11:30 am
 November 24 - Thanksgiving Day
 November 25 - Jackie Marie – 7:00-10:00 pm
 November 27 - Country Jam with Mikey Fuss – 2:00-6:00 pm
 December 10 - Universal Sound – 8:00-midnight
 December 13 - Legion Dinner – 6:30 pm
 December 18 - Legion Breakfast – 7:30-11:30 am
 December 23 - Jackie Marie – 7:00-10:00 pm
 December 25 - Christmas Day Dinner at VFW
 11:00 am-1:00 pm
 December 25 - Christmas Day – Post Cloased
 December 31 - New Year's Eve Band – 8:30 pm-1:00 am
 January 1, 2017 - New Year's Day

Event Pricing

Post Dinner: 6:30 pm \$11.00

Breakfast: 7:30-11:30 am
\$8.00 adults, \$4.00 children

For upcoming Legion entertainment, call the Post at 205.9090 for a recorded message.

CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

"All the darkness in the world cannot extinguish the light of a single candle."

Francis of Assisi

Legion Members: If you know of anyone who is hospitalized, or in need, please contact Rich Fries at 608.273.8758.

Auxiliary Members: If you know of anyone who is hospitalized, or in need, please contact Lynn Robertson at 608.608.692.6321.

Hall Rentals

Call Linda Swangstu – 608.873.9428

Commander continued from page 1

We have purchased a deep fryer for the Post lounge. Thanks again to the Bryant Foundation for their generosity. We all like to snack when we come to the lounge. This will include appetizers and dipping sauces. Come and give it a try.

Don't forget that volunteering is very important for the Post and we appreciate all of you for stepping up. On that note, come and find out where you could be needed as a volunteer. Cleaning is always an issue whether it is kitchen, hall, pantries, windows, lounge, fans, or elsewhere to keep our Post in order. Maybe you could come in once a month or a week and make a difference. An hour can even make a difference. Anything is appreciated.

One last note to all members, let's make the lounge an enjoyable place for good conversation and not a place for grumbles. If there are problems, please come to me with your concerns.

Thank you,

Commander Sonny

President continued from page 1

A minimal price is charged for the meal. Last year, the ALA gave a donation to the quilting group to help offset the costs of the materials. It is a great partnership, and a wonderful way to support and thank our veterans!

As you attend breakfasts, funerals, or other events, you will most likely notice the new aprons that Auxiliary members are wearing and the table cloths that are placed on the serving and dessert tables—they add a nice touch. A special thanks to Sonny Swangstu and Jim Oler for getting the washer and dryer hooked up. Being able to wash the aprons, table cloths, and dish cloths in house makes it much more convenient.

For those members who have not paid their 2017 dues, please send them to Membership Chairperson Lisa Olson at 1617 Moline Street, Stoughton, WI 53589. If you have questions, you can also contact her at 608.2798.4847.

President Cathy ☺

Book Sale December 17

Post 59 is having another book sale. Drop off your books before December 10 at the Post.

Thank you.

Submitted by Steve Grady

FREE
CHRISTMAS DINNER

All Are Welcome!

VFW Hall
Veteran's Road (CTY N)
Stoughton, WI
December 25th

Serving from 11:00 am - 1:00 pm

Delivery will start at 10:00 am

If you need a ride or
if you want a meal delivered,
please call

The Stoughton Senior Center

(608) 873-8585

by Dec. 23

- Leave your name, address and phone number
- How many dinners you will need
- How many passengers need a ride
- Rides and home delivery limited to Stoughton School District area

Donations are Appreciated

Hosted by the American Legion, VFW Post 328
and their Auxiliaries and Volunteers



Update on Veterans Memorial

The planned November 12 dedication program has been postponed due to some delivery problems

All the initial shipments arrived in a timely fashion, but the final shipment, made up of several monuments and three educational pillars was delayed for several weeks. In the meantime, work continues at the park. Several of the educational pillars have been set, as well as several of the monuments. The centerpiece base is in place; the archway has been set; the parking lot is paved, and the landscaping has been completed.

Fund-raising continues. About 240 pavers remain unsold as well as twelve educational pillars and eight benches. In addition, other previously unplanned expenses, (a well, iron filter, etc.) have been added to the original budget.

Purchase forms may be picked up at the Legion and at the VFW, or contact Roger Nitzsche (873.6433) or Randy Robertson, (608.764.5881) co-chairmen of the fund-raising committee.

Gift certificates are also available. Donations are welcomed and appreciated.

*Submitted by Bud Erickson
Photo credit: Tim Erickson*

Sons Happenings



**3rd Annual
Toys For Tots**

Campaign

Sponsored by The Sons of The American Legion Squadron 59

All Toys donated will be distributed locally by Dane County Health and Human Services.

Drop off Locations:

- ✚ American Legion Post 59
- ✚ Stoughton Collision Center (Behind the American Legion)
- ✚ Zelm Chiropractic Centers- Stoughton and McFarland Locations.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION GO TO: www.post59.us
Or Check out our Facebook Page!**

Monthly Post Meeting Schedule

Legion – 2nd Monday – 7:00 pm

Auxiliary – 2nd Monday – 6:30 pm

SAL – 2nd Wednesday – 7:00 pm

Meetings are held at the Post.

All members are encouraged to attend.



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

Open to the Public

Bar open to serve you Wednesday - Sunday

Wednesday & Thursday: 3:00 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



Curtis Eugene Larson – WWII Veteran



Curt was born on April 20, 1923 in Stoughton, WI. He attended Stoughton Schools, graduating from high school in 1941. He was drafted into the US Army in February 1943 at the age of 19 and lived in Stoughton at 303 E. Main St. until that time.

On February 17, 1943 Curt was sent to Fort Sheridan, IL for one week to receive his army clothing, duffle bag, etc. He was then put on a train February 24, 1943 to go to Camp Roberts, CA where he would do basic training until June 2, 1943. Typically, there would be a seven day furlough following basic training, however, the South Pacific was so short on soldiers that Curt was sent directly to Camp Pendleton, CA to get ready to be shipped overseas. Therefore there was no furlough for him or the others. He would then board the USS *Sea Witch*, heading to the island of New Caledonia. As the ship passed under the Golden Gate Bridge, Curt and his fellow soldiers flipped coins. Heads-we'll make it home, tails-we won't...Curt was one of the lucky ones who made it home.

Curt arrived on the island of New Caledonia on July 28, 1943 to find out where he would be assigned to go next. He then boarded the ship LST 488, heading to Guadalcanal, where they landed on August 24, 1943. After leaving Guadalcanal, Curt would see his first battleships and aircraft carriers as they pulled into the harbor at New Hebrides, enroute to Vella Lavella.

Curt then boarded the USS *Mo Keen* on August 29, 1943 on August 29, 1943, heading to the island of Vella Lavella. The next day after boarding the ship they were attacked by a Japanese plane. Curt was sleeping topside and was awakened by a bomb landing off the port side. He did not sleep the remainder of the night. Curt's company landed on Vella Lavella on Aug. 31, 1943. On this day Curt would dive into his first foxhole due to an air raid. While there he would be assigned to the 25th Infantry Div. It was on this island that he would first see American graves, which was the first reality of war.

His company had been given C rations, which were the size of a Cracker Jack box. Each box contained three meals with proper amount of nutrition for one day. The jungle where they were located was so thick there was no place to set up a kitchen or beds. His company had to live on C rations and sleep in foxholes. After several weeks, they found an area by the ocean to set up a kitchen and were able to bathe and wash their clothes. They had been wearing the same clothes for almost 60 days.

Curt's company would board the ship *Torena* on November 7, 1943 heading to New Zealand for a much needed rest. They would celebrate Christmas eating turkey and all the trimmings and New Year's dancing at Orange Hall. Of course, they would also be involved with doing more basic training. Curt's company would next board the USS *President Jackson* on February 19, 1944, going back to New Caledonia, where they would spend nine months getting more extensive training on the hills and terrain, getting ready for combat.

Curt's company boarded the USS *Oconto* on December 15, 1944 and landed on Luzon in the Philippines on January 11, 1945. This is where the 25th Infantry Division spent 165 days on the front lines. His division was the only one that spent that many consecutive days on the front lines throughout the entire South Pacific. While serving on the front lines, Curt encountered four near-death experiences. The first occurred when he was walking through high weeds to deliver something to headquarters. He came upon a Japanese soldier face-to-face about 15 feet away. Both men were so scared they looked at each other, turned around and ran. It could have been a very different outcome.

The second happened while on patrol in the jungle of Luzon. Curt could see four Japanese soldiers in full view from the waist up. He immediately hit the ground and hid behind a tree. They shot at him for at least 15 minutes as he lay behind the tree. The men he was on patrol with surrounded the Japanese from behind and killed them all. Curt said that the Japanese shot the tree so many times that there wasn't much of it left!

The third took place on April 29, 1945 while he was in his foxhole. He and his buddy heard someone talking, so Curt left his foxhole to see two lieutenants. Suddenly, an artillery shell landed next to the Lieutenants and both of them were killed. Curt was about five yards away and jumped back into his foxhole, at which point he saw he was covered in blood. He had been hit by shrapnel from the exploding shell. It was then that Curt earned his Purple Heart, which he would receive on December 1, 1945.

The fourth occurred when he was on patrol in the middle of the afternoon in a rice paddy. He and his fellow soldiers heard shooting, so they hit the ground and lay very still. After laying there quite a while, his fellow soldier said he needed to sit up. Curt told him "No, lay here until it gets dark". He didn't listen, sat up and was immediately killed. Curt lay there until dark and he felt it was safe to leave.

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Curt's company found a location where they could put up a kitchen, get a decent meal and clean clothes. They would spend five days there. This location was next to a hill where the soldiers would take turns keeping watch for the Japanese. One night Curt was on the hill with a buddy when they heard a Japanese soldier crawling up the hill toward them. When he got close enough, Curt's buddy shot him. The next day there was blood on the hill but they never found his body.

Another incident that happened of that same hill was when Curt witnessed Japanese soldier commit hara-kiri. Curt's commanding officer thought there may be Japanese soldiers hiding in the nearby trees, so he decided to throw an artillery shell into the area. A little while later, a Japanese soldier ran out holding a grenade to his chest and pulled the pin. The Japanese would commit hara-kiri, believing it was a more honorable death. During some of the heaviest combat, the Japanese were shooting so aggressively at Curt's company that they had to stay in the same location for three days. While there, a First Lieutenant, who had just graduated from West Point, came to see exactly where the Japanese were located. The guys told him they didn't know exactly where they were because they couldn't get close enough to them. The Lieutenant decided to look for himself, even though he had been warned not to, for fear of getting shot. The First Lieutenant had spent four years at West Point and within 15 minutes on the front lines, he was dead.

Curt contracted yellow jaundice on May 15, 1945 while fighting on the front lines. He was transported to a hospital on a one-seater plane. His first plane ride ever! He was so sick he remained in the hospital until June 4, 1945, weighing 118 lbs. When he recovered, he was sent back to the front.

After the 165 days, the 25 Infantry Division was taken off of the front lines in Luzon. They were then taken to a camp where the Bataan Death March had previously taken place. While Curt was there, the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. On August 15, 1945 President Roosevelt announced that Japan accepted Unconditional Surrender. The war was over!

Curt's company then boarded the USS *Lyon*, heading to Nagoya, Japan. They would have been one of the first divisions to enter Japan, had the war not ended. While on the ship, they received information that they would need to remain on board for an additional five days before entering Nagoya: there were mines located in the ocean that need to be removed before entering that location. Once the 25th Infantry Division got to Nagoya, they were stationed at the Nagoya Boys Cadet School. It was a wonderful setup, including hot showers, lights, stoves and everything Curt had dreamt of for so long! Since he was a staff sergeant, he was put in charge of the building containing the Japanese small arms. It was his responsibility to keep the Japanese from getting hold of them.

One of Curt's most memorable experiences came when he was in the Philippines and saw General Douglas MacArthur coming ashore on Oct. 20, 1944. MacArthur was famous for saying "I shall return" to the troops and Curt was there when he did just that. It's something he said he'd never forget.

The saddest day of the war was when Curt lost his best friend, Cassie Gest, who was from Madison, WI. They met each other at Camp Roberts during basic training and soon became very close friends. Cassie had been shot by enemy fire, so Curt went over to visit him at the field location where he had been shot. They were able to talk for a short time but by the time Curt returned to his company, Cassie had passed away. His fellow soldiers didn't tell him about it for two days, knowing how upset he would be. When the war was over, Curt went to Madison and visited with Cassie's parents, which was very hard to do. Needless to say, they were very appreciative.

Curt's company left Japan in December 1945 to be shipped back to the United States. They were first told they would be going to the state of Washington, however, there were so many ships in the harbor that they were rerouted through the Panama Canal up to New York. As they arrived in New York, the soldiers were so excited to see the Statue of Liberty that they all gathered to one side of the ship and almost tipped it over! When Curt got back to the U.S. he returned to Camp McCoy and then directly to his hometown of Stoughton. Three years after his return, he purchased the J and S Soda Grill, along with his friend Douglas Stockstad. It was there that he met his future wife Lorraine (Lolly) Lyon, who worked as a waitress. They were married on May 21, 1949 and were together for 36 years until Lolly's death in 1985. Curt and Lolly raised three girls: Kristi, Susie, and Sally. They also have five grandchildren: Scott, Bryan, Brad, Kelly, and Michael.

Curt was employed in Stoughton by the US Postal Service for 32 years until his retirement in 1984. He is a member of VFW Post 328 and also American Legion Post 59. During the three years that Curt served his country he never had a single furlough and never spoke of his experiences with anyone in his family, including his wife. His emotions would get the best of him, so the only communication was through the many letters, which he still has to this day. He only started sharing his experiences as he got into his late 80's.

Curt is a very proud veteran and proud to have served his country for those three years of his life.

Submitted by Evelyn Kahl



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December 13, 2016

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