



Left to right starting in the rear: Senator Jon Greiner, VFW Vice Commander Mike Baker, Representative Curtis Oda, Representative Lawanna Shurtleff, Representative Kerry Gibson, Representative Neil Hansen, Representative Julie Fisher, Representative Paul Ray, Congressman Rob Bishop, Representative Brad Dee, Medal of Honor Recipient George Wahlen, Governor Jon M Huntsman, signing the bill that allocates the funds and Greg Basont, Director of DFCM at the sight of the future Veterans Nursing Home near Ogden.

## Northern Utah to Get Veterans Nursing Home: Utah's Veterans Await Groundbreaking

By Dennis McFall

On Friday April 11 2008, several hundred veterans along with family, friends, legislators and other city and county officials from the Weber/Davis/Box Elder areas gathered at the site of the soon to be constructed Northern Utah State Veterans Nursing Home for a ceremonial Bill signing by Governor Jon M. Huntsman, Jr. Governor Huntsman said he is proud to sign this Bill and stated it is well deserved that we as a state are stepping forward to do our part for those who have given so much for their country.

The Utah legislature, with full support of Governor Huntsman, agreed to go ahead with this 120 bed Skilled Nursing Home, at a cost of \$19.7 million, using state funds for construction now, rather than waiting for federal funds from the Office of Veterans Affairs. The federal share will then be recovered at a later date, likely 3-5 years down the road, resulting in a repayment to the state of Utah of approximately \$13 million. Representative Brad Dee and Senator Pete Knudsen were the Bill sponsors in the House and Senate respectively. The Bill passed both bodies without a single dissenting vote.

This facility has been a high priority with veterans since the initial grant was filed with the VA in 1993 according to Terry Schow, Executive Director of the Utah Department of Veterans Affairs, the office that will oversee the construction of the nursing home with the Utah Division of Facilities Construction & Management (DFCM.) Veterans Affairs will then oversee operation of the nursing home through a contractual agreement with a nursing home management company, yet to be selected.

Dennis McFall, Deputy Director of the Utah Dept. of Veterans Affairs will function as the Project Director and will develop a Request for Proposals (RFP) for the actual operation of the nursing home. It is anticipated that the building could open as early as summer of 2010, or even prior to that time, depending on construction and design requirements moving smoothly. The \$19.7 million dollar project will be the second Veterans Nursing Home for Utah. Currently there are 81 beds operating at the Utah State Veterans Nursing Home in Salt Lake City however the need for additional beds has been evident for a number of years. The Salt Lake City facility carries an ongoing waiting list in excess of 100 persons consistently, and many persons who inquire do not add their name to the list because of the anticipated lengthy wait time for admission.

Continued on page 4

### UPCOMING VETERANS' EVENTS

- May 15<sup>th</sup>** 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Veterans Memorial Golf Tournament, Hubbard Golf Course Hill Air Force Base. Teams may register until May 5<sup>th</sup>. Contact Tonja at (801) 326-2372 for more info
- May 15<sup>th</sup>** Freedom From Stress workshop with Byron Katie, 3-5p and 6-9 pm, The Tower at Rice Eccles Stadium. Free for all Veterans and family members
- May 17<sup>th</sup>** Armed Forces Day at Murray Park
- May 26<sup>th</sup>** Memorial Day, Ceremony at 10am at Veterans Cemetery, 17111 Camp Williams Rd, Bluffdale, UT
- May 28<sup>th</sup>** Senator Hatch's Senior Conference, Little America
- May 30<sup>th</sup>** Rededication of Veterans Section of Salt Lake City Cemetery Thanks to Onyx Construction.
- June 5-7<sup>th</sup>** DAV State Convention- Rainbow Hotel and Casino in Wendover, NV
- June 6-8<sup>th</sup>** VFW State Convention, Courtyard Marriott Layton, UT
- June 7<sup>th</sup>** Marine Corps League State Convention, Jerimah's in Ogden
- June 9-13<sup>th</sup>** Boys State sponsored by the American Legion, Weber State
- June 20-22** American Legion State Convention, Holiday Inn Redwood and North Temple Salt Lake City
- June 27<sup>th</sup>** Women Veterans Benefits Bazaar at Salt Lake Community College Student Center, Redwood Campus 2:30-6:30pm
- July 1-3** Military Appreciation Days at Hogle Zoo, free entrance for military, Veterans and families with ID.

## LaVonne Willis, former Director of the Utah Division of Veterans Affairs, Dies at age 73

By Tonja Knight, Staff Writer

It is with great sorrow that we announce the passing of LaVonne Willis.

Mr. Willis was born July 9<sup>th</sup>, 1935 in Austin, TX and lost the fight with cancer in March 30<sup>th</sup>, 2008. LaVonne was the Director of the Office of Veterans Affairs and the then Division of Veterans Affairs from September 1, 1992 to October 31, 2001. During this period, he worked tirelessly on behalf of Utah Veterans implementing many programs, including coordinating the location and size of Utah's first State Veterans Nursing Home.

Mr. Willis was a founding member, long time board member, and Chair of the Homeless Veterans Fellowship in Ogden, Utah. One of his greatest areas of support to Veterans was developing and implementing programs honoring World War II and Korean War Veterans. LaVonne was a retired Air Force and a Vietnam Veteran. In lieu of flowers, the family asks that a donation be made to the American Cancer Society in LaVonne's name.

## For Your Consideration: A Note from the Editor

By Berni Davis, Editor

This recent legislative session saw many bills that had the potential to benefit Veterans. Many of these bills passed. Utah Veterans will now have another Nursing home, WWII, Korea and Vietnam Veterans who left high school to perform their patriotic duty can now receive Honorary High School Diplomas from their school districts, Purple Heart recipients can now get up to a Masters Degree on the state's dime, and widows of Veterans can now get the property tax abatement in the same year they become eligible, as opposed to waiting until the next January to qualify for the benefit. However, it seems that with every bit of progress the State of Utah makes in the realm of Veterans benefits, there are always those who want more and what to know why "was I left out?" No matter how many advancements are made, there are still so many more to make to provide every group with the benefit they deserve for their service.

The issue also comes down to resources, how many there are and who gets them. Veterans are at the mercy of the State Legislature who determines the funding that we get and benefits that are awarded to us. As a Veterans community, we cannot flood the legislature with too many requests at one time, we have to focus our efforts and prioritize the programs we need most.

Another issue is in determining the priority for the programs. The Veterans Advisory Council determines their legislative priorities, based on several factors, but there are still Veterans who have their own priorities and never let them be known to those who can in fact, change things.

For instance, I have spoken to many Veterans who complain about the Utah State benefit for free fishing licenses for Veterans. Currently a Veteran must have an obvious physical handicap (confined to a wheel chair, missing a limb ect) to qualify. Many Veterans feel like they are entitled to a free fishing license but the law says they are not. I encourage them to write to their legislatures, because the only way we can build up enough support from the state's law makers, to get them to focus their efforts of fixing all the states problems in one month long legislative session, is to make sure they know that the people who vote for them, want to see a particular change.

So to finally get to the point of all this rambling, if there is a change you want to see, a benefit you feel the state should provide to those who serve, don't just complain about the lack of benefits to your friends down at the local post, but write to your representative, write to the Veterans Advisory Council and try to drum up support to make those things happen.

To find your representatives go to [www.le.utah.gov](http://www.le.utah.gov) and for your federal representatives, go to [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov) or [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov). Simply typing in your zip code and clicking on the search button will give you the name and address of the people who have the power to make change.

### The Utah Veterans Voice

550 Foothill BLVD STE 202  
PO Box 58897  
Salt Lake City, UT 84158

#### Staff

Executive Director: Terry Schow  
Deputy Director: Dennis McFall

Editor In Chief: Berni Davis

Staff Writers: Larry Dawson  
Tonja Knight  
Pauline Davies

(801) 326-2372  
1-800-894-9497

[veterans.utah.gov](http://veterans.utah.gov)

#### Veterans Voice ad rates:

Full Page (10x16): \$450

1/2 Page (10x8): \$280

1/4 Page (5x8): \$160

1/8 Page (5x4): \$100

1/16 page (2x5): \$ 50

Email your suggestions  
to [berni.davis@va.gov](mailto:berni.davis@va.gov)

It's your Voice, let it be heard

#### USE YOUR VOICE!!!

Send Letters to:  
Editor, *Veterans Voice*  
Utah Department of  
Veterans Affairs  
PO BOX 58897  
Salt Lake City, UT 84158-  
0897

## Veterans Lose a True Hero

Dear Editor,

Being involved in veteran's issues for a number of years, I have been privileged to know and admire the dedication of one veteran whose life exemplifies what true giving to others is all about. The passing of John Owada was not only the passing of an outstanding individual but the passing of a remarkable achievement of service, one that possibly will never be equaled.

He served on multiple Honor Guards for many years and it has been estimated that John participated in over 4,000 Honor Guard burials!

He was born March 14, 1927 in Tacoma, WA. He was evacuated from Vashow, WA at the start of World War II to Tule Lake, CA; then to Minidoka, ID. He served in the Army during WWII and the Korean War; then in the Army Reserves through the 1980's. He retired from Tooele Ordinance and was an active member of the Japanese Church of Christ, DAV and VFW.

With a sad heart, we say good-bye to our friend, our comrade, our hero.

John Maher



John Owada, March 14, 1927- Nov 14, 2007

## Veterans' Dream for Nursing Home Becomes A Reality

Dear Editor:

"A dream is a wish you heart makes." The Veterans of Utah, most of us I'm sure, all had the same dream and wish. On Feb. 29, the Utah Senate granted our wish when it approved a veterans' nursing home to be built in Ogden. I wish I could truly express my feeling when this happened. I was present when the vote was taken and I can't think of the words to express my emotions.

This task has taken a few years, countless meetings, rallies, briefings and trips to the Capitol in support of this home. There were times when I thought of quitting because I am 83 years of age and tire easily. But I kept going because there were other Veterans around me who shared the same vision. Now I can sit back and know that I helped in this endeavor, and that all the work and effort was worth it.

I thank Rep Brad Dee, Sen. Peter Knudson, Gov Jon Huntsman, our elected officials and, most importantly, the citizens of Utah for making my dream and wish come true.

It's Party Time!

Bob Ramos, Riverdale

Dear Editor:

Mary, from Tremonton, Utah in Frank DeHaven's article (Winter 07) has a hard trip to Salt Lake and back.

It is a shame Frank did not tell us how she travels, since it is at most a 2 hour trip by car, which gives plenty of time to the VA center. When I lived in Tremonton I made the trip, had treatment and was back in time to milk the cows in the evening and sometimes had time left over.

So in the article Frank erred in not telling us how she travels: by Greyhound, by car, or by skateboard. With the facts we can appreciate his article with more conclusion.

Sincerely,  
De Wayne Harding  
Sandy

## Events at the Fort Douglas Military Museum

It's a great time to get acquainted with the Fort Douglas Museum, or reacquainted if you've "been there, done that." The Museum is opening new exhibits and sponsoring some really exciting events in the next few weeks.

**SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON; The U.S. Cavalry in the American West, 1857 to 1943.** The Fort Douglas Museum will be premiering a SPECIAL EXHIBIT featuring a large collection of rare Cavalry uniforms, equipment, weapons and saddles on April 12, 2008. There will be specialists and reenactors on hand to share information and answer questions about this fabled part of the Army's Military past. This exhibit will run through July 31<sup>st</sup>.

The 96<sup>th</sup> RRC is again having the ceremonies and tributes at the Fort Douglas Cemetery on Memorial Day, May 26<sup>th</sup> at 10AM. This is always a wonderful and inspirational event. The Fort Douglas Museum recently received the historic cemetery records and will have information available for families and friends of those buried in this hallowed ground.

On June 14<sup>th</sup>, FORT DOUGLAS DAY will be an all day event beginning with a Prayer Breakfast sponsored by the 96<sup>th</sup> RRC at the Bowery in *This Is the Place Heritage Park* followed by a march to Stilwell Field. The Museum will have restored Military vehicles on display, a Civil War encampment and special events all day. In the afternoon, the 23<sup>rd</sup> Army Band will perform in the Historic Bandstand and there will be a ceremonial cake cutting for the Army's Birthday. Many other things are in the works, please check with us as the date comes closer for the exact schedule.

Also, please ask when you visit about the plans for the MILITARY WOMEN'S MEMORIAL which is going to be built on the Museum grounds. This is a unique and important part of our future.

For more information call 801.581.1251, got to [www.fortdouglas.org](http://www.fortdouglas.org) or come and visit us at 32 Potter St. We are in the Historic Fort Douglas area of the University of Utah, on the south side of the Parade Ground.

## GETTING THE NEWS

By Jennifer Stephens, Guest Columnist

A gut punch. That's what it feels like. A very powerful gut punch. The kind that knocks you off your feet and doesn't let you breathe. 31 Marines dead. That's what the news says. I hear it as 31 of my brothers dead.

I've never met them. At least I don't think so. I'll have to read the list of names when they're released to be sure. They are still my brothers, whether I ever met them or not. I know that doesn't make sense, and I can't really explain it. Since when did human emotions ever make sense anyway?

They're my brothers. I feel that. I feel the loss of that. I am a Marine, and so are they. 'Once a Marine, always a Marine.' We may not have shared blood, but we did share the title Marine, and pride in being able to call ourselves by that title. We shared an understanding of what it is to be a Marine. We shared a love of Country, and of Corps. 'My Corps, your Corps, Marine Corps.' 'We all bleed Marine Corps green.' That's what we were told. We were also told Marines never cry, but the tears on my cheeks show that for a lie.

When The Towers fell, I felt pain and grief like everyone else. Same for the Pentagon and Pennsylvania deaths. But it wasn't . . . personal. I didn't know any of them. I didn't know these Marines either, but somehow this is personal. The first deaths of this War were Marines. That was personal. It just is when it's Marines. Again, I can't explain it. I just know it - feel it.

A few moths ago a fallen Marine was buried in his home town, where my mom and stepfather live. While I was up there visiting them, I said I was going to stop by the cemetery and visit his grave. My stepfather asked if I knew the Marine. I answered "No." Before I said anything else my mom answered the same way I would have. "He was a Marine." Nuff said. At the grave I couldn't help smiling a little at the large Harley Davidson themed flower arrangement. I thought of my friends who loved their motorcycles. My friends who were back over in Iraq for a second tour. I prayed I wouldn't have to stand at any of their graves.

A gut punch. That's what it feels like to get the news. That's what it feels like to lose my brothers.

## FVE Scholarships For OEF/OIF Veterans

From VA Public Relations, Media Affairs

Currently the maximum educational benefit available to veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan under the GI Bill is just \$1,101 per month, or \$39,636 over four years. Those veterans who served combat tours with the National Guard or Reserves are eligible for even less - typically just \$440 per month. In contrast, the College Board reports that the average four-year public college costs more than \$65,000 for an in state student, while a private university costs upward of \$133,000.

To help bridge that gap additional assistance can be applied for through the Fund for Veterans' Education (FVE). This fund provides higher education scholarships to veterans of all branches of the United States Armed Forces who have served in Iraq or Afghanistan. Founded in 2007, the FVE will provide scholarships for undergraduate study during the 2008 and 2009 academic years. Scholarships will be awarded, based on need, to veterans from all fifty states and the District of Columbia who are pursuing undergraduate degrees at four-year colleges and universities, two-year community colleges, and a range of technical and vocational schools.

The FVE is a program of The Kisco Foundation, Inc. an independent, not-for-profit 501(c)3 organization. The Fund's revenue is derived entirely from grants and gifts from foundations, corporations, and individuals. All gifts are tax deductible. The Fund for Veterans Education will award up to \$3.5 million in 2008-09 in undergraduate scholarships for veterans returning From Iraq and Afghanistan .

Applications are available beginning 1 APR for the fall 2008 term. The next application deadline is 15 JUN 08. The awards, which may be renewed for the following academic year, are intended to cover financial need not met with need-based grants and military education benefits. For more information and to apply refer to <http://www.veteransfund.org/apply.php>.

**Have You Used your VA Education Benefits? For Active Duty, GI Bill Benefits expire 10 years from your date of discharge and without a change in law, there is nothing that can be done to get those benefits back. For National Guard and Reserves, your benefits cease when you discharge. You've earned these benefits-Be sure to use them. Call 1-888-GIBILL1 for details on your benefits.**

## Volunteers - One of America's Most Valuable Assets

By Vicki Jo Hansen, Salt Lake County Aging Services, RSVP

United States Military veterans are not strangers to service. They have served our country to help secure freedom for all Americans and now many of them are serving our community as RSVP volunteers. Our heartfelt gratitude goes out to all veteran volunteers.

National Volunteer Week, April 27-May 3, 2008, is about thanking one of America's most valuable assets – our volunteers – and calling attention to all that they do to improve our communities. The theme of 'Inspire by Example' truly reflects the power volunteers have to inspire the people they help, as well as to inspire others to serve.

The Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) is part of the National Senior Service Corps and is sponsored by Salt Lake County Aging Services and The Corporation for National and Community Service. RSVP offers opportunities to serve that enhance lives, foster independence and strengthen communities.

Army Veteran Nelson J. Pflieger is a volunteer for the Sandy Senior Center breakfast and pantry programs. He also provides the muscle for the center's thrift store. He lifts heavy items for sorting and organization. Thrift store funds are used to help support many of the center's programs for the benefit of the seniors that participate

Navy Veteran Ed Zimowski enjoys helping people. He is a volunteer driver for Senior Transportation and drives elderly citizens to medical appointments because they can no longer drive. The people that ride with him say he lifts their spirits. He is a great listener and lends an ear when there may not be anyone else to listen. This personal interaction makes a huge difference in the well being of the people he serves. Ed also tutors children who are behind in their reading skills with the Bridges Volunteer Program.

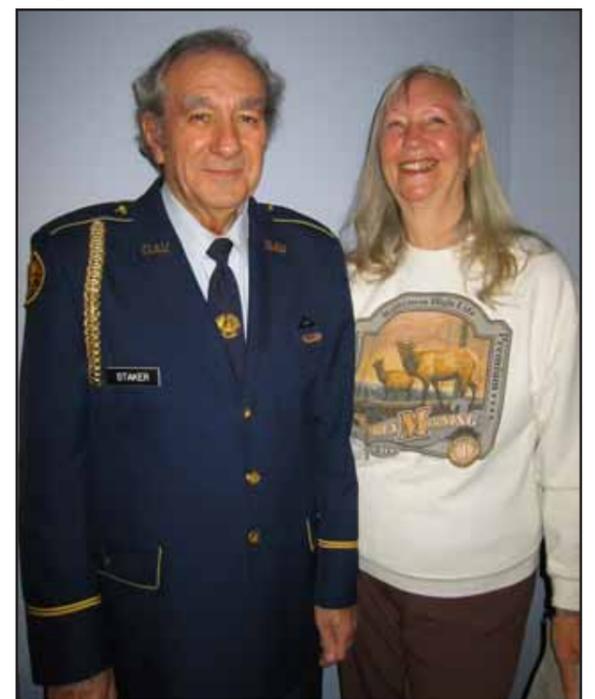
Air Force Veteran Charlie Davis serves in an administrative capacity at the George E. Wahlen Veterans Medical Center. He helps keep radiology records in order for the many patients there. He also visits with patients to help them pass the time. For someone who is bed bound a friendly face and pleasant conversation can really make a positive difference in the way they feel and even in their recovery. Charlie also volunteers for many special projects addressing a variety of other important community issues such as fund-raisers, health fairs and educational projects.

Navy Veteran Jay Staker and his wife Meta serve at the VA Medical Center. Jay is the President of the Volunteers Association, which addresses any need the hospital has. He and Meta do fund-raising for patients' needs and activities and they recruit volunteers. They are both active with the Disabled American Veterans where Meta is a past state DAV Auxiliary commander. Jay is a past state DAV commander and presently an Honor Guard chaplain. The Stakers also contribute their efforts to their local Senior Center as Advisory Council members. Jay is the council president; Meta is the Center's representative on the Aging Services' Nutrition Council. Both serve with the Center's meal and food pantry programs.

There are many critical needs in our communities being addressed with volunteer support. Aging Services and RSVP honors the exemplary contributions of all volunteers who serve. The condition of the homeless, the hungry, the elderly, at-risk youth, and the disabled and many other issues that effect our lives is enhanced because of the generous commitment of volunteers.

Your volunteer support encourages others to contribute their knowledge, skills and time to further enrich our community through service. As a volunteer you truly do 'Inspire by Example'. Thank you!!

There are countless stories of volunteers' kindness in people's lives. So if you are an RSVP volunteer, a community volunteer or someone who does random acts of kindness, we thank you for improving people's lives and making our community a better place for us all! If you are thinking about volunteering call Vicki at 468-2490.



Above, Jay and Meta Staker

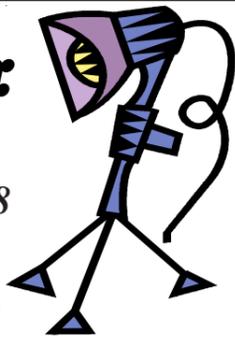
## Spotlighted Veteran

LaVonne Willis

July 9th, 1935- March 30th, 2008



Would you like to nominate someone as our "Spotlighted Veteran"? Send a letter describing their service and why they should be chosen to Veterans Voice, Spotlighted Veteran PO Box 58897 Salt Lake City, UT 84158-0897



## Local Air Force Veteran Receives Recognition

By Berni Davis, Editor

Richard B Rasmussen from Sandy, UT has a combined 35 years of service to the federal government. He recently retired as a Supervisory Special Agent with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and prior to that, he was a aviator- fighter pilot with the US Air Force, graduating from the AF Academy (AFA) in 1977. Rasmussen was recently recognized for his contributions to Utah high school students who he facilitated appointments into the Air Force Academy, coaching and counseling and as an advisory to the American Legion's Boys State program.

Rasmussen has participated in the Boys State program for the past 8 years, speaking to the high school students about integrity in government as a representative of the FBI but with a focus on the military.

A true testimate of hard work, Rasmussen grew up in a poor family, to parents who had not completed high school. They wanted him to get a higher education and as such, he had to work very hard to get a scholarship, he applied for many. As the acceptance letters came rolling in, Rasmussen had narrowed it down to three schools, one of which was the Air Force Academy. He, his mother and his father all had a vote, 2 to 1 for AFA, "It was the best decision I never made." Said Rasmussen of his parents voting for the Academy. The experience changed his life and gave him opportunities he never would have had otherwise.



Rick Rasmussen, US Air Force Veteran

Now Rasmussen has two sons who have followed in his footsteps to the AFA, one has completed six overseas tours, including Iraq. "It is a horrible experience to have my son gone, the effect on family is hard," Rasmussen said of his son being deployed to combat zones.

Still, Rasmussen continues to volunteer his time, to help the community and the youth who also want to join the exclusive ranks of AFA graduates. He has a strong commitment to render assistance to youth and it is this commitment that caught the attention of Governor Huntsman, who recognized Rasmussen's diligent efforts earlier this year.

Now, Rasmussen may have retired from the federal government, but is not quite ready for total retirement, he now works on the civilian review board for the Mayor of Salt Lake City and plans to push veterans issues.

### Nursing: Cont from page 1

An additional facility is planned for Utah County as well as the southern portion of the state, in the Cedar City or St. George area. Grants are filed and approved by the VA but funding at the federal level is not available at this time. It is anticipated that funding for these facilities is, at a minimum, perhaps 5-7 years away, even though the need is great. Utah's veterans can receive as much as 100% of the cost of their care paid for by the VA through the State Home Per Diem Program, depending upon their level of disability. The usual per diem reimbursement is about 48-50 percent with the veteran paying the difference. This amount is paid by the VA, directly to the State of Utah on behalf of the veterans, and is paid only when the veteran is receiving care in a State owned facility such as this and the one in Salt Lake City.

An Advisory Committee will be formed, to include individuals from the affected service area primarily, and will meet regularly to monitor progress, ensure regulatory compliance, and offer ideas to enhance the overall scope and effectiveness of the services delivered. Additional updates will be provided to keep the veterans community fully informed as to progress. If you have any questions or would like to have additional information please contact the Utah Department of Veteran Affairs at 801-326-2372. Both Mr. Schow and Mr. McFall are available to meet with your group as well, to discuss this and additional programs, projects to assist Utah's veterans.

## Farewell to my friend

By Terry Schow

By now many of you know that **LaVonne Willis** passed away on March 30, 2008 after an intense battle with cancer. LaVonne served as the Director of the Office and then Division of Veterans Affairs for ten years from 1991 to 2001. I was Chair of the Veterans Advisory Council when we hired LaVonne and worked with him and Governor Bangerter's office to secure furniture for his office from state surplus property, the budget for the Office the first year was \$ 50,000.00. He was a one person office under the Department of Community and Economic Development housed with the Ethnic Offices.

Because his budget was tight, LaVonne secured free office space from the VA in the Federal building in SLC to save money. For a couple of years, when LaVonne had to travel out of town, WWII Veteran Casey Kunimura and his wife Dorothy would travel to SLC from Ogden to man the office and answer the phones for several hours each day. I mention these points to underscore the challenging times during the early period of LaVonne's tenure at the Veterans Affairs office. Although under funded and under manned, LaVonne carried out the duties of the agency for many years with limited help from work-study personnel or temporary employees.

I first met LaVonne when he and Doug Wadsworth, Director of the SLC VA Regional Office, and I worked on the Board of the Homeless Veterans Fellowship in Ogden. LaVonne served as Chair of the HVF Board for a couple of years during the period when they acquired the row house on 23<sup>rd</sup> Street in Ogden.

Not one to honk his own horn, few in Utah knew LaVonne had been appointed by VA Secretary Jesse Brown to serve on the VA's minority veteran's advisory committee.

Even though LaVonne's health had not been good the last few years prior to his retirement, he continued to fight for Utah Veterans and their families. I shall miss my friend but take comfort in the knowledge that I had the opportunity while he was in the VA hospital to thank him his for his service to our country and his service to Utah Veterans. I am proud to call LaVonne my friend and proud to have had the opportunity to serve with him. Utah Veterans benefited from his service during the reactivation of the Veterans office in Utah.

For those who want to share thoughts or observations with LaVonne's widow Barbi they can be forwarded to our office and we will get them to her.

## Marine Corps League Detachment Relocated to Bountiful

By Joe Surace

The L/Cpl. Dion J. Stephenson [Post] #1014 has been operating out of the Salt Lake City area since February 1999. It has been relocated to Bountiful, Utah. L/Cpl. Stephenson graduated from Woods Cross High School in 1987. He was the only Marine killed in action during the Persian Gulf War.

Department Commandant Joseph P.C. Surace rededicated the Detachment on Saturday, 23 February 2008 at the Best Western Cotton Tree Inn, North Salt Lake, during the Department Quarterly Meeting.

Marine Corps League members participate in the Veterans Administration Voluntary Service Program, at the George E. Whalen VA Medical Center. The League also awards scholarships, sponsors a national physical fitness program, participates in community functions, and supports all community projects. It also serves as a support system for Marine Reserve families while their Marines are away from home.

All enquires in reference to the Marine Corps League should be directed to the Department Commandant Joseph P. C. Surace, by calling (801) 281-6101 or by internet - [pimarine\\_56@sisna.com](mailto:pimarine_56@sisna.com).

## PART II: Permanent Camp to Freedom

### The Story of a WWII POW - Richard Burt

Compiled By Tom Aikins, VAMC, Mental Health  
Continued from Volume 9, Winter 2007

We arrived at the small railway siding of Kiefheide on a cold winter morning in December 1944 where we were marched to the POW camp now known as Stalag Luft IV. The place was large and looked cold and forbidding. The area surrounding Stalag Luft IV was cleared of all trees and brush for better security and visibility from the several guard towers.

After walking from the train station, we reached the south end of the camp, which contained the vorlager, or outer camp. Most of the Red Cross items and the food we had received were confiscated, however, we were given uniforms and a stern lecture on conduct while in the camp along with a caution about trying to escape and the consequences we could expect upon recapture.

The camp consisted of four compounds, each with 10 single floor barracks that held 250 prisoners, Kriegies as we were called, and called ourselves. Each lager also had a large building for the kitchen, which also contained a large general-purpose room. There were four other small buildings, two on each side of the lager. One was a building with cold water only and the other one was a latrine. There was also a shallow concrete pool filled with water for fighting fires by means of a bucket brigade. The camp, being somewhat isolated, from any other town or habitation; had no outside help in case of fire. Each room had a bucket to haul hot water and/or soup from the kitchen and for fighting fires.

The camp was surrounded with a 10 to 12 foot high, barbed and netting wire-electrified fence and a "warning wire" 20 feet inside of that. We were told that anyone crossing the warning wire would be shot. If a ball rolled beyond the warning wire to the fence we would have to call a guard and have him retrieve it for us. All around the perimeter were tall guard towers manned 24 hours a day by guards' with machine guns, and searchlights to sweep the compound during the nighttime hours.

We were all taken to different lagers for billeting assignments. I was taken to lager A and assigned to barracks number three. We were a sad looking bunch of troops. The room was very crowded. I had to put my straw tick in the hall for sleeping. There were 24 bunks and they were all occupied plus two others who slept on the floor. We stored our straw mattresses under the bunks during the day.

Each lager had a senior non commissioned officer (NCO) that was chosen as the "man of confidence" and he acted as

the go between for the prisoners and the German officials. All disputes about conditions, rations, and any other matters pertaining to discipline in the lager were handled by him. Also, each barracks had a barrack's chief, usually the senior ranking. This system worked quite well considering our circumstances.

The guards told us when we first came into the lager not to stare at our fellow prisoners who had been here for a long time and acted a little peculiar. If we saw them sailing their little boats on the fire pond we should not stare at, nor make fun of them. I guess before it was all over we were all just a little bit peculiar.

We were all assailed with questions about how the war was going, how close were the Russians, and anything else that might be newsworthy by our fellow prisoners who had been there for a while. We were quite a mix: different ages and various backgrounds, where we flew from and where we were shot down. The common denominator was that we were all hungry; we were hungry all of the time.

Each night we were locked in our individual barracks and the dogs were released into the compound. Every morning, regardless of the weather, we had to fall out and line up in front of the barracks for "Appell" (roll call). There was a German guard for each barracks whose job it was to count everyone assigned to that barracks. We had to stand there in the cold until all of the barracks in the lager were counted and the report to the German officer in charge was complete and correct. We were then dismissed and could move around the compound as we wished.

We normally received only two meals a day. We were on our own in the morning. I usually soaked a few dried prunes in a powdered milk mixture, when I had them. At noon one man from each room in the barracks would take our bucket and go to the kitchen, and pick up boiled potatoes for all the men in that room. The evening meal was usually thin barley soup, or made from rutabagas, large turnip like plants. We were issued one sixth of a loaf of bread a day. They were small loaves of black bread. One of the ingredients was sawdust, with a chemical added that was supposed to help digest it. It really didn't matter; we were hungry enough to eat anything.

The International Red Cross (IRC) tried to supply each POW with food parcels, one per man per week. They were coming into Germany at the port of Lubeck on the North Sea. But due to limited transportation, it was difficult to get them distributed. Obviously these packages had a low priority on Germany's limited rail and highway systems. Our average was one parcel a week, divided between at least two men. This was difficult because of the nature of the packaging. We formed into what we called "combines" of two men each. It was also sort of a buddy system, to watch out for each other. This system was to prove of even more value later on. It seemed to work well and made sharing a little easier.

The median of exchange, or money in the camp, was the cigarettes. They were used to trade for clothing, other food, privileges, and as money in the poker games. All things of value were determined by how many cigarettes the item was worth.

Our daily routine was strictly boredom. From time to time the IRC would ship books, magazines, cards, and chess sets to all of the camps that they could get access to. We read everything we could get our hands on, played poker and chess. Bridge was also a big item with many more onlookers than participants. In the evenings before lights out and after lock up there would be bridge tournaments between rooms. They were usually bet on quite heavily, with cigarettes, of course. Many cigarettes were won, or lost, at these games as the kriegie buddies would back their favorite teams.

During the day, weather permitting, we would sail our little boats on the fire pond or walk the perimeter along the well-worn path just inside of the warning wire. We

either generated or passed on rumors about the progress, or the lack thereof, in the war.

There were periodic searches of the barracks. When these occurred we would have to remain outside in the snow or rain and the cold while the guards would methodically go through all of the rooms in the barracks. When we were allowed back in we could count on finding everything turned over and mixed up. This was especially true when the Germans made their last major effort of the war, the Battle of the Bulge. We knew something significant was going on due to the attitude and surliness of the guards. Inspections and general harassment became more frequent, and punishment was meted out for even the slightest infractions. We got so we could usually tell how the war was going for the Germans by the attitude of the guards. They actually seemed to believe that they were going to push right through to the English Channel.

At Christmas time we each received one complete IRC Christmas food parcel. It contained the usual things listed earlier plus candy; nuts, dates, and some even had fruitcake in them. They also contained more cigarettes than the regular packages. This package weighed about 15 pounds. It was the only food package I received up to that point unopened. The guards raided all others. It really began to seem like Christmas.

So we spent Christmas cold and sick from eating that rich food, but we enjoyed every minute of it anyway. Different groups of us would go around the perimeter singing Christmas carols, at least those verses that we could remember, because we had no music.

Then at night after we were locked up in our barracks and the dogs had been turned loose in the compound, we would huddle around our meager stove and share stories of Christmas' past and wonder what our families were doing, wonder if we would ever see them again - and generally get lonely, homesick, and maudlin.

However we did have to agree that we were on the ground, safe, at least for the time being, and generally not in harm's way. Even so, we all felt that we were the lucky ones because we were still alive and whole while many of our comrades in arms were no longer alive.

The rumors of approaching Russian armies began to run through the camp about the first of February. We did not know whether we were to be shot or evacuated; and if we were going to be evacuated, to where? We could tell a little about what was going on because of the nervousness of the guards and a lot of meetings being held that included our man of confidence and the camp officers. The rumors were finally confirmed that we were to be evacuated very soon and were warned by our man of confidence to make preparations to leave. We had to be able to carry everything that we wished to take with us, which really wasn't all that much, for me at least. I had not been in the camp long enough to accumulate very much. We were never able to find out where we were being evacuated to, nor whether we would be going by train, truck, or walking.

I had an extra shirt that I fashioned into a backpack with a small sewing kit. On the evening of Feb 5<sup>th</sup> we were told that we would be leaving early in the morning. Not wanting to leave anything behind, we packed everything we figured we could carry, and then a little bit more. I had a full backpack and my cardboard suitcase. We were to take one blanket, which we rolled and after tying the ends together could put the loop over our shoulder. It was to be a sleepless and restless night.

We evacuated Stalag Luft IV in the early morning of 6 February 1945. We left in different sections of about 600 men to a column. It is hard to imagine the confusion and logistical problems of putting 10,000 POW's on the road in a short period of time. A few days prior to our departure approximately 3,000 of our 10,000 were crowded into "40 & 8" boxcars and sent south. These were mostly the sick and wounded. We had no idea where we were headed, nor how long it was going to take to get there. The only thing that I did know by then was that I was going to be walking. It is probably a good thing that we did not know that we would be on the road, on foot, for 86 days.

February of 1945 was a tumultuous period in Germany for everyone concerned: the German military, the German civilian population, all of the POW's, even the advancing Allies, who practically owned the air over Germany.

It was a cold, overcast and brooding morning that 6<sup>th</sup> of February as we left our lager and started to walk to the west. We were told that we would only be on the road for a few days and then would be moved by railway. We had very little sleep the night before and wondered what lay ahead of us. I do remember hoping that I would not get sick along the way because there was no doubt in my mind what would happen then, and it was not a pleasant thought. We had not been on the road more than a few hours when it began to drizzle mixed with sleet. It was not long before we were soaked through.



Advertisement

**MIRIAM AIAZZI**

**Mortgage Loan Officer**

**4001S 700E #250 SLC, UT, 84107**

**(801)747-2480 Office**

**(801)703-3748 Cell**

**miriam.aiazzi@chl.cc**

## AMERICAN LEGION POST #112 CELEBRATES 60<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSITY

By John Maher, DAV Adjutant

Members, veterans, friends, visitors, and State American Legion dignitaries came together Saturday Night February 16, 2008 at American Legion Post #112 in Salt Lake City to celebrate the post's 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

Master of Ceremonies Bob Frank, canteen manager and a post member for 47-years, kept the festivities lively as he introduced State officers and other dignities and presented awards to long serving post members. Joining Bob to make the event even more entertaining was the American Legion Auxiliary, which presented gifts to its officers.

An impressive list of State American Legion and Auxiliary officers were present consisting of: State Commander Gary Schwartz; Lee Englebrecht, State Vice Commander; Dana Meier Past State Commander; Greg Rowley, Department Adjutant; Richard Fisher, Past State Commander; Terry Schow, Director of the Office of Veteran Affairs, State of Utah; Debbie Swafford, Auxiliary State President; Georgia Englebrecht, Auxiliary Vice President; Bob Jones, National Vice Commander of the Sons of the Legion; Alan Setterburg, Past National Vice Commander; Bill Christoffersen, NEC; Bob Frank, past State Commander; Nina Mason, Auxiliary District 8 President; and James Smith, present Post #112 Commander.

Comprising of over 1100 members, American

Legion #112 had its humble beginnings in its original post home located in downtown Salt Lake City and has enjoyed two other homes in its 60-years of service to veterans.

Although there is some confusion regarding the original location, most seem to believe it was located downtown at 2nd South and 3rd West.

Chartered on February 20, 1948, the post almost immediately became a leading advocate for veterans.

"This is truly an outstanding American Legion Post, one that has been a leader in veteran issues for those 60 years." said Bill Christoffersen, a Legion member of 63-years and a member of the National Executive Committee since 1963.

"In its original present location, the post was just a lounge attached to Bruno Pizza Parlor", says employee Ginnie Dodge, "later the Legion purchased the pizza parlor and expanded the post."

Through the years the post has developed an impressive outdoor area consisting of a Bar-B-Q, horseshoe pits, and picnic tables.

It seems that everyone you talk to has a story about the post and his or her involvement.

"Bob Crossley got me started in this post, we came in for a beer, I ended the evening my joining and have been a member for about 37 years," offered Don Reaveley, Past Dept. Commander of the Disabled American Veterans, and Past



Post 112 Commander Jim Smith and Bob Frank at the celebration

Chairmen of the Utah Military and Veterans Affairs Committee.

"I did not realize that the post was celebrating its 60 anniversary, but I can tell you this is one of the best American Legion Post. When I lost my husband they became my family", said Nina Mason, District 8 Auxiliary President.

Long time post members remember employee Mary Aston, who was the bar manager for many years. "Everyone loved my sister Mary and the 31 years what I have spent here has been a true joy," said Millie Broadwater, "they have treated me good all those years."

For those looking for a great meal, the post offers a well-attended brunch each Sunday morning along with its many other activities.

Located at 320 East 3900 South, Salt Lake City, Utah, the post members are looking forward to at least another 60-years of service and welcomes new members to join them.



From left to right; Heidi Hopper, Jay Staker (partially obstructed), John Maher, Bill Joyner, Robin Korogi, Veda Jones and Brian Westfield dedicate the new van for the DAV transportation program.

### DAV Van Dedication

By John Maher

On Wednesday, March 5, 2008 the Disabled American Veterans and the George E. Wahlen VA Health Care System held a joint van dedication ceremony on the grounds of the Medical Center.

The occasion was to dedicate the replacement Disabled American Veterans (DAV) van to be stationed in Price, Utah. This van, along with 9 others, is operated under the jurisdiction of the DAV Van Transportation Program stationed at the Medical Center, and it used exclusively for the transportation of veterans to the center.

Under the supervision of Heidi Hopper, the program transports veterans from four states: Utah, Wyoming, Idaho, and Nevada.

Replacement of the Price, Utah van became necessary as the Chev. Venture 2003 van had over 172,000 miles. Purchased in 2004, with 22,526 miles, the van transported 2,268 veterans to the medical center.

### THE STATE OF VETERAN'S LOANS

By Miriam Aiazzi

The mortgage industry has come under severe stress in the last few months, largely in part to a decline in the sub-prime industry bought about in large part by the unwillingness of Wall Street to purchase mortgage backed securities that carried a higher risk factor. The last six months has seen many lending institutions going out of business, lenders tightening up lending guidelines and in some instances closing their doors, and borrowers struggling to qualify for mortgages that just six months ago were easier to qualify for than an automobile loan. What has made the situation all the more frustrating is that mortgage interest rates have dropped to a forty year low, making the time to buy and refinance now, but the ability to do so, increasingly more difficult. Well, at least for some.

What has remained a constant in this time of ever changing guidelines is the state of government backed mortgages, namely FHA and VA Loans. In fact the recent Economic Stimulus Act of 2008 signed into law on February 13<sup>th</sup> has increased loan limits on FHA and VA loans from \$417,000.00 to \$729,750.00. This is great news for individuals who were previously required to get 'jumbo' loan rates, as well as individuals in VA loans seeking to refinance. What is even more enticing is that no down payment is required for VA loans for both

purchase and construction loans if the veteran has full entitlement. This allows veterans to retain their saving for other purposes, and offers an advantage to borrowers who have been unable to accumulate savings.

Furthermore, VA loans do not require mortgage insurance (still required on FHA loans) and neither do they require cash reserves, again allowing veterans to retain their savings. VA loans also offer fixed rate 3/1 and 5/1 ARM's, allowing the veteran to select which program best suits his/her needs. VA Loans also allow for a 4% seller concession, which allows the seller to contribute more towards the transaction. VA Loans also allow for a higher debt ratio for easy qualifying and the fact that the loan may be assumed under the original terms if the prospective purchaser qualifies for the loan is an attractive resale option. The borrower also has the option to payoff the loan at any time without restriction or penalty. VA loans can also be refinanced with an Interest Rate Reduction Refinance Loan with no appraisal and no credit qualification. In addition, 90% cash-out refinances are allowed.

The bottom line is that while the press continues to spell out the doom and gloom of the current mortgage industry, VA and FHA loans still remain a highly feasible and lucrative option for borrowers seeking to purchase a home or refinance an existing loan. Indeed, the market is an ideal buyers market. Time is of the essence. Contact me today to get pre-approved for your VA loan.

## Recent Enhancements in Veterans' Eligibility for Health Care Benefits

From Office of Public Relations, Media Affairs

During the week of January 29, 2008, VA extended health benefits for recently discharged veterans who served in a theater of combat operations and extended the timeframe certain veterans have for applying for one-time dental benefits. In addition, VA announced that effective February 1, 2008 the amount paid for beneficiary mileage reimbursement for travel to VA medical facilities had increased from 11 cents per mile to 28.5 cents per mile.

The period of enhanced health care eligibility for combat veterans who served in a theater of combat after November 11, 1998, (commonly referred to as combat veterans or OEF/OIF veterans) has been extended to: Currently enrolled veterans and new enrollees who were discharged from active duty on or after January 28, 2003 are now eligible for the enhanced benefits, for five years post discharge; and Veterans discharged from active duty before January 28, 2003, who apply for enrollment on or after January 28, 2008, are now eligible for the enhanced benefit until January 27, 2011.

The benefits for combat veterans included in this authority are enrollment in Priority Group 6, if not eligible for a higher Priority Group placement, and charged copays only for medication and/or treatment of conditions that are clearly unrelated to their combat service (e.g. common cold, broken bone).

VA will automatically reassess currently enrolled veterans and veterans who applied for VA health care but were denied enrollment to determine if they are eligible for the new benefit. If the veteran is found eligible for the new benefit, VA will automatically update their enrollment information.

Dental benefits have been extended for veterans to make application from 90 days to 180 days post-separation. To be eligible for this benefit, the veteran must have served on active duty 90 days or more, applied for VA dental care within 180 days of separation from active duty, and their certificate of discharge cannot indicate that they received necessary dental care within the 90-day period prior to discharge.

Veterans who were denied this one-time dental benefit between August 1, 2007 and January 27, 2008, will be contacted and offered this benefit; if their application was made within 180 days of discharge

Increased beneficiary travel mileage reimbursement rate increased from 11 cents per mile to 28.5 cents per mile for travel associated with obtaining VA health care services. As a result, over a million disabled veterans will see their mileage reimbursement more than double. **To enroll for care at the VA Medical Center, call 1-800-613-4012, or log on to [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov) for more information.**

## Fisher House Update

By Phillip P. Know

The proposed building of a Fisher House in Salt Lake City has received its largest vote of support from the Veterans of Foreign Wars Department of Utah. Most recently checks from VFW Posts throughout Utah were presented in support the project. The total amount of \$5755 represents the highest amount donated by a single organization since May of 2007.

The Fisher House Campaign, which started collecting donations one year ago, has received statewide endorsement by the many veterans groups in the form of pledges and the recent generous amount received from the VFW represents the largest single pledged donation received.

Don Willis, a retired Navy Boatswains Mate, took on the challenge of establishing a Fisher House on the Utah VA grounds early 2007 and expressed his gratitude "Those vets of the VFW have demonstrated their commitment to support this project all along ... it is tremendous that they have stepped to the plate and donated this significant amount ... I'm sure the many other vet groups will follow the VFW example now and fulfill their pledges."

The VFW, under the leadership of Department Commander Vern Wade, has made support of the Fisher House a priority. This project will provide much needed free lodging for the families of hospitalized

## More Education Benefits Coming to Reservists, Guardsmen: *Changes Affect Those with Multiple Tours*

From VA Office of Public Affairs, Media Relations

WASHINGTON – Some members of the National Guard and the Reserves who serve on active duty will see a significant increase in their educational benefits, thanks to improvements announced today by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

*"Reservists and National Guardsmen who serve multiple tours on active duty may get an increase in their educational benefits, in keeping with the value of their service to our nation," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. James B. Peake.*

Under new provisions, members who accumulate three years on active duty, regardless of breaks in service, may be eligible for the maximum payment under the Reserve Education Assistance Program (REAP). Previously, reservists and guardsmen had to serve two continuous years on active duty to receive the highest payment.

The new eligibility rules are retroactive to October, 1, 2007. The top payment under REAP is currently \$880.80 per month.

The new law, part of the National Defense Authorization Act, also expands the period of eligibility for certain Guard and Reserve members who complete their service obligation before separation from the reserve.

Members meeting these criteria may be eligible to use REAP benefits for a period of ten years following discharge. Benefits typically end upon separation for members who do not complete their full, obligated service.

Additionally, some REAP-eligible National Guard and Reserve members may now make an extra contribution to the Department of Defense to increase their monthly benefit rates.

Service members receive an additional \$5 per month for each \$20 contributed. With the maximum \$600 contribution, this option can add up to \$5,400 to a member's total 36-month education benefit package.

Beginning on October 1, 2008, participants in REAP and the Montgomery GI Bill program for the Selected Reserve who pursue non-degree programs lasting less than two years may also be eligible to receive accelerated payments.

During FY 2007, more than 60,000 National Guardsmen and reservists were paid under REAP, more than 41,000 were paid under the Montgomery GI Bill program for the Selected Reserves, and approximately 344,000 participants were paid under the Montgomery GI Bill for active-duty members.

For more information on changes to VA's GI Bill benefits, go to [www.GIBILL.va.gov](http://www.GIBILL.va.gov) or contact VA directly at 1-888-GIBILL1 (or 1-888-442-451).



This February, Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs, James Peake, visited the VA Regional Office in Salt Lake City. Of his visit, he commented that it was great to be there, to see the people at the front end of the spear, he was delighted to see the people who are helping the Veterans. Above, Left to Right, Doug Wadsworth, recently retired Director VA Regional Office, Salt Lake, Secretary Dr. James B Peake, Executive Director Utah Department of Veterans Affairs, Terry Schow and Iraqi Veteran Richard A Hansen on the Secretary's visit to Salt Lake City this February.

vets at the Salt Lake VA Hospital. At an estimated cost of \$5 million the project has received strong support throughout the state from a wide range of groups both military and non military. The impressive diversity of non military interest groups ranges from the Daughters of the American Revolution in southern St George to the numerous Rotary Clubs throughout Utah to a nearby Elks Lodge and even a local guild of Insurance representatives. Added to the long list of military organizations, Utah boasts a wealth

of patriotic support for the military and its mission and the sacrifices made by both the uniformed members and their families.

This support has been made possible through the diligent efforts of Willis and Ray Bachiller labeled the on site Navy Marine Corps Team. With Willis as the "Champion" of the Utah Fisher House Project and Bachiller as the official Spokesperson, the project has received widespread support because of numerous

Continued on page 9

## “Iron Man” Clayton Morgan Nears DAV National Driving Record

John Maher — Disabled American Veterans, Dept. of Utah Adjutant

Imagine driving over 600 trips from Ely, Nevada to the George E. Wahlen Health Care System in Salt Lake City, Utah in just over a 8-year period. Do the Math! That figures out to 75 trips a year, or one trip every 4.8 days, or 1 trip every 3.4 days counting only work days when the DAV vans are running.

Those are the incredible numbers put up by Clayton Morgan, voluntary driver for the Disabled American Veterans transportation program at the medical center.

‘This man is truly remarkable. He is up at 3 AM and ready to pick up his veterans, and it doesn’t matter what the weather is. If he is scheduled to be here he will be here,’ says Heidi Hopper, DAV Hospital Service Coordinator at the Medical Center.

During the winter months, it is not unusual for Clayton to get through even when professional drivers back away. Driving lonely two-lane roads can require nerves of steel but white knuckle driving is old hat to Clayton.

‘I will never forget the day Clayton hit a deer on the highway and drove the rest of the way into the medical center with the hood wired down, both headlights broken, leaking radiator and half the front bumper missing. He actually had to look out the drivers window to see where he was going’, said John Maher Department Adjutant of the DAV. ‘He drove all the way about 30 miles an hour but he wanted to get his veterans to the medical center.’

There are approximately 4,000 volunteer DAV



Clayton Morgan standing next to his DAV Van. He has been a volunteer driver for the DAV for over 8 years.

drivers in the nation, and Clayton ranks in the top four in mileage. Even more impressive is the fact that those ahead of him have been driving for many years and Clayton has accomplished his numbers in just over 8 years. Incredibly, he averages about 4,300 miles per month making about 11 monthly tips. His goal is to be number one the country in mileage.

You might think with all the volunteer hours Clayton puts in driving the van, he would not have much time for other things. Think again!!! Clayton is known in Ely, Nevada as the man who likes to

build house decks, and he does it at no cost to the owner. There is only one rule Clayton has: you must buy the best materials on the market and be patient because, just like his driving, when Clayton builds a deck it is a professional job.

At his present pace Heidi Hopper, Utah DAV HSC, projects Clayton to become number one in the country in about 2-3 more years. When this happens, Department Adjutant John Masher has promised Clayton a huge honorary banquet in his honor at DAV department headquarters.

## SFC Gordon L. Ewell Receives Purple Heart

By Berni Davis, Editor

Utah National Guard Headquarters, Draper, UT- On April 1st, 2008 Sergeant First Class (SFC) Gordon Ewell was awarded the Purple Heart for wounds received as a result of enemy contact in Iraq in 2006. During this deployment, SFC Ewell successfully completed 59 “route clearing” missions, on which, he received multiple injuries, many of which were caused from Improvised Explosive Devices (IED’s).

It took nearly two years for the military to recognize that SFC Ewell’s injuries, which now require him to use hearing aids, a cane and an eye patch, were deserving of a Purple Heart. The issue was that SFC Ewell’s injuries were, in large part, a result of Traumatic Brain Injury and were developed progressively over time. As there was no outward obvious injury and no blood shed, SFC Ewell was not initially awarded the Purple Heart.

This was rectified this April, as dozens of individuals, family members and fellow service men and women gathered to witness “Gordi” receive this award.



Gordan Ewell, wearing his Purple Heart and, always at his side, his wife Terra Ewell.

After SFC Ewell received the Purple Heart, he offered some remarks, “[The Purple Heart] won’t make me see better, or hear better. I’ll still bobble funny, but I’ll bobble with pride. It will help aid my healing.”

which the veteran earned during their time of active duty in the United States Armed Forces

Revitalization activities involved dedicated district officers and a national field representative working with Post 17 in recruiting 42 new post members. Legion posts rely on an active community based membership that has a true understanding of the needs of the community. Post 17 held a social and orientation meeting on Friday February 22 at the Tooele National Guard Armory, with a total of 27 legionnaires and their families being present. Those in attendance were provided with an opportunity to meet new and old members alike, as well as receive a brief overview of the legion Family concept. A social was held at which time a beautiful “Welcome to Post 17” cake was served to all in attendance. The next meeting is planned for March 12th, the second Wednesday of the month at 7:00PM at the National Guard Armory. If you missed this first meeting please feel free to contact Commander Fred Mason, District Commander at (801) 942-0676, Roger Mead at (435) 882-1230 or Bill Niles at (435) 843-0593.

## Willie B Hunsaker, WWII Veteran from Brigham City, receives award from President George W. Bush

By Berni Davis, Editor

This spring, Willie Hunsaker was awarded the “President’s Call the Service Award” for dedicating 6,545 hours to supporting community programs including Boy Scouts of America and the Veterans of Foreign Wars. This is the second award that Mr. Hunsaker has received for volunteer service. He has been volunteering his time since his youth when his father taught him to always help others.

## UTAH STATE VETERANS MEMORIAL CEMETERY

By Monte Rock, Sexton, Veterans Cemetery

The Cemetery is available to members who have served in each of the five branches of military service and their spouses. National Guard and Reserves are also eligible under certain conditions.

VA cemeteries include the gravesite, headstone, opening and closing of the grave and perpetual care. Only government headstones are permitted.

If the veteran has an other than dishonorable discharge from military service, he or she would be entitled. The spouse and any dependent children of a veteran are also eligible.

The Cemetery is located at 17111 South Camp Williams Road in Bluffdale Utah 84065. The phone number is 801-254-9036.

Office hours: 9:00am - 5:00pm Monday - Friday. Park open 7 days a week from dawn till dusk.

The VA will provide a gravemarker for those buried at VA cemeteries. It will also provide this service for all eligible Veterans, even those buried in private cemeteries, however, they will not provide gravemarkers for spouses, or dependent children buried in private facilities. Burial flags, certificates of service and military honors are other services available for Veterans.

## TOOELE AMERICAN LEGION POST 17

The Department of Utah American Legion Commander, Gary Schwartz is pleased to announce that Tooele American Legion Post 17 is actively involved in a successful post revitalization program. The community of Tooele stands to benefit from an active viable legion Post, said Commander Schwartz. Commander Schwartz went on to say that an active post provides an opportunity for America’s future leaders, our children, to benefit from legion youth programs that teach Americanism. Many of these Americanism programs provide students with an opportunity to compete for scholarships and grant dollars. The legion also provides financial support for veterans and active duty deployed personnel who have dependent children in the household. Annually, Legion service officers assist veterans and their families in recovering and obtaining thousands of dollars in services and hospital care,

## VA Reaches Out to Women Veterans: Women Vets Have Earned "Benefits, Respect, Thanks" – Peake Fourth National Summit on Women Veterans Issues Begins June 20

From VA Office of Public Affairs, Media Relations

WASHINGTON — Recognizing the valor, service and sacrifice of America's 1.7 million women veterans, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has created a comprehensive array of benefits and programs.

"Women who served this country in uniform — whether veterans of World War II, Korea, Vietnam, the Gulf War, the current Global War on Terror or peacetime service — have earned our respect and thanks," said Dr. James B. Peake, Secretary of Veterans Affairs. "They have also earned the full range of VA programs offered by a grateful nation."

Secretary Peake also announced the Fourth National Summit on Women Veterans Issues to be held from June 20 – 22 in Washington D.C. The Summit will offer attendees an opportunity to enhance future progress on women veterans issues, with sessions specifically for the Reserve and National Guard, information on military sexual trauma and readjustment issues, after the military veteran resources and many more programs and exhibits.

Women veterans are entitled to the same benefits and medical care as their male counterparts, including health care, disability compensation, education assistance, work-study allowance, vocational rehabilitation, employment and counseling services, insurance, home loan benefits, nursing home care, survivor benefits, and various burial benefits.

VA also has a multitude of services and programs to respond to the unique needs of women veterans. VA offers comprehensive, high-quality primary health care services for women, including Pap smears, mammography, and general reproductive health care. Along with these services, VA's mental health care for women includes substance abuse counseling, evaluation and treatment of military sexual trauma and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

VA has several specific initiatives for 2008 including: enhancing skills of primary care providers who treat women veterans; examining other women's health issues, including cardiac care, breast cancer, and colorectal cancer in women; focusing on family issues and avoiding birth defects through enhanced pharmacy practices for women veterans of child bearing age.

Women veterans are the fastest growing segment of the veteran population second only to elderly veterans. Approximately 1.7 million women veterans comprise 7 percent of the total veteran population. Approximately 255,000 women use VA health care services. Today, over 200,000 women are serving in the Armed Forces. With the increasing number of women, VA estimates by 2020 women veterans will comprise 10 percent of the veteran population.

There is a women veterans program manager at every VA medical center, a women's liaison at every community based outpatient clinic and a women veterans coordinator at every VA regional office.

VA is reaching out to women veterans who are experiencing problems related to sexual trauma or harassment while in the military. All veterans, men and women, may receive free counseling, disability compensation, and related services for sexual trauma

incurred in the military. In addition, there are programs for women veterans who are homeless or are victims of domestic violence.

There is a Military Sexual Trauma (MST) point of contact for psychotherapy at every VA medical center. Extensive enhancements of the MST program have taken place over the past two years, including training of providers in the most current effective treatments for PTSD and sexual trauma. In addition, VA has sites for combat PTSD in women and is examining how best to address complex combat and MST issues.

In addition to the services provided at each VA medical center, the Department also operates fifty Women's Health Centers, within medical centers, that serve as specific locations for women veterans to receive care. These centers develop new and enhanced programs for women; some also conduct research on medical and psychosocial issues.

Secretary Peake recently visited the largest women's center in the VA, located at the James A. Haley VA Medical Center in Tampa, Florida. With more than 20,000 women veterans enrolled for care, the center is able to provide a variety of women specific services in one location.

Through its Center for Women Veterans and the Secretary's Advisory Committee on Women Veterans, VA is continually looking into new and innovative ways to provide improved benefits and services to women veterans.

More information on the Fourth National Summit on Women Veterans Issues can be found at [www.va.gov/womenvet](http://www.va.gov/womenvet). For more information about VA benefits and services, veterans may contact their local VA regional office, medical center, or vet center. For questions concerning VA benefits call 1-800-827-1000, for questions concerning VA health care call 1-877-222-8387 or go to our website at <http://www.va.gov>.

Women Veterans Bazaar  
June 27th 3-6pm  
SLCC Redwood Campus!!!

## Memorial Ceremony Honoring Utah's Fallen held at Salt Lake Community College

By Darlene Head

On January 22, 2008 the Salt Lake Community College Veterans Office held a Memorial Ceremony honoring Utah's military personnel who have died while on active duty in support of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom.

This ceremony gave Gold Star family members of Utah's fallen an opportunity to place a dog tag engraved with the name of their family member on the memorial 'The Fallen'. Veteran and SLCC student Josh Crowell sculpted the monument, which was unveiled last fall during the SLCC Veterans Day Program. Josh saw his work as "a way to honor those who have the ultimate sacrifice for our country and their families."

The Memorial ceremony was held for the Gold Star family members of fallen military personnel, veterans, students and leaders in the Utah State Veterans community. The memorial was donated to SLCC and will remain on display in the Student Center on the Redwood Road Campus. For more information on the monument call Darlene Head, Veterans Office Supervisor at 801-957-4289.



## SENATOR BENNETT PAYS TRIBUTE TO TROOPS ON FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF IRAQ CONFLICT

From Public Affairs, Washington DC

U.S. Senator Bob Bennett (R-Utah) (Photo above with troops in Kuwait) made the following comments on the fifth anniversary of the conflict in Iraq commending American troops for their dedication and service.

"Regardless of partisan politics or political positions, all of us must stand in solidarity to recognize the sacrifice and patriotism of the brave men and women in uniform who have served there.

I want to commend our soldiers and sailors, airmen, and marines for their service to the country. I've been in Iraq and seen the remarkable job that they're doing, working under the most difficult of conditions to defend freedom and the ideals of democracy there and around the world.

Let us remember our troops, not just on anniversaries and holidays like this one, but every day. I thank them and their families for the service and sacrifices they provide. I pray for the safety of those still in the field."

### Fisher House: Continued from page 7

presentations made over the past year. A retired Marine Colonel, Bachiller has carried the story of Fisher House throughout Utah logging over thousands of miles on the road and in the air. Over 110 presentations have been made by Bachiller who sees his mission as "carrying the message to the frontlines and to the foxholes so that informed decisions to donate can be made." Most recently Bachiller traveled to Idaho where his address to the Idaho Falls Chamber of Commerce netted \$700 on the spot in checks from a private citizen, the local VFW Ladies Auxiliary and a Chapter of the Vietnam Veterans of America with pledges of over a \$1000 more from at least six more organizations.

The campaign has bolstered much local interest and thus the Headquarters of Fisher House based near Washington DC has even proposed a date of March 2009 as a potential ground breaking. The success of the fundraising campaign is dependent upon the contributions of those "who are the portrait of patriotism in giving thanks to the vets and their families for their unselfish sacrifices in both peace and conflict."

If you are interested further information or in participating in the Fisher House Utah campaign or if your group would like to receive a presentation please contact Ray Bachiller at [bachiller1@aol.com](mailto:bachiller1@aol.com) or 801-430-8762. Show your patriotic support and help build our Fisher House. Show the world that Utah cares for its Vets.

### Continued from page 5: POW Story

I was carrying more than I should have and before nightfall I realized that. Along with what we left our barracks with we had been issued a full Red Cross package as we left the camp. It wasn't long before I began to see things being discarded along the roadway. We were weak and realized that most of our things would have to be left behind. I too had to make the hard decision to discard much of what I was carrying. I had to let my cardboard suitcase and everything in it go. I just knew that I would never make it if I did not lighten my load, and so did many others.

We were strung out all along the road, mostly in groups of 500 or 600. More guards were brought in to supplement our Luftwaffe guards. These were mostly older men who could not fight with the combat troops on the eastern or western fronts. At the rear of each column were several guards with dogs. Some of the columns went south and some went west. After the first few days we were all pretty well scattered out.

At night we were usually herded into large barns where we shared the warmth of the few animals that were still there. It would take the barns from several nearby farms to accommodate our group. When we stopped for the night we would usually receive our ration, one sixth of a small loaf of bread and some boiled potatoes. We had all fashioned for ourselves a container made from a "Klim" can, powered milk. We fashioned a bail out of wire for it and hung it from our packs or from our belts. Sometimes we could steal a few potatoes or cabbage if we could find the storage pits. We also watched for where the grain, any kind of grain, was kept for the animals and tried to steal a few handfuls. We were cautioned not to drink the water without boiling it. Sometimes we could steal a little grain and then parch it in the bottom of our Klim cans, add boiling water, and the drink was what we called ersatz coffee.

We would be secured in the barns with no lights and when we had to go outside to relieve ourselves we would have to have a guard with us. We usually bundled together to conserve our heat, but were still cold and wet most of the time. By the end of the third day it became evident that we were going to be on the road for some time. We all had wet and blistered feet. By then we had pretty well lightened our loads of things that now had lost their importance to us. The one thing that we never discarded was food. The sanitary conditions were totally nonexistent. I did not bathe or shower during the whole trek and only occasionally had hot water to wash my hands.

One of the doctors on the march evaluated our rations as 770 calories a day. If it had not been for the occasional IRC parcel many more on the trip would have died. These parcels gave us an additional 600 calories a day and were about our only source of protein.

After the first few days some of our weaker POW's started to straggle behind only to be prodded along by the rear guards with the dogs. We did have a sick wagon for those who could not walk. As time went on more and more were dropping out and we never did learn what happened to them. I lost my battle buddy about half way through the march and never saw him again. I only hoped that he was taken to a hospital somewhere.

It was not long until we were all infested with lice and fleas that sapped our strength and made it difficult to sleep. Dysentery, a natural consequence of living in filth and drinking unsafe water, was one of our worst problems. I escaped it until nearly the end of the march, but we lost many men to this sickness.

When one of us would drop out along the way to relieve ourselves a guard with a dog would stop alongside and make us double-time up to our place in the column when we were through. Pride soon went away and we did not care where we were when we needed to go. We had all reached a point where it just did not matter any more.

We usually used side roads or farm roads and stayed away from major population centers. We all hated to go through any town because of the ridicule and stoning we would receive. The Hitler youth were particularly abusive and were continually encouraged by their elders. This was particularly true when we passed through towns or cities where there had been heavy damage from allied bombing. We also hated to walk on the cobblestone streets that were usually present in the towns and cities. Our sore feet had a hard time walking on them.

When there were no barns available, we slept on the ground. We would break off some branches to help keep us off of the snow, use one blanket on the boughs and cover ourselves with the other one. These nights were hard because our feet would not dry out and with only the two blankets for the both of us they were long hard nights.

We would see Russian fighters or bombers from time to time early in the march and that would generate all kinds of rumors that we were about to be encircled and liberated. But that's all they were, rumors. None of them came very close to

us and we were never strafed or bombed while we were still in the east part of Germany.

By now frostbite, especially in the toes and feet, added to the misery of the blisters. We were just walking along, and each day was just like the last one. I was cold, it was sleeting and snowing most of the time and I was wet and hungry all of the time. I still suffer from the frostbite in my feet today when it gets cold. It turns out that this winter of 1944-45 was one of the coldest winters in Europe.

Much of the area we passed through was forested, which offered some shelter on those nights when we were not billeted in the large barns. We could see silver reflections all along the way that turned out to be bits of the chaff that we used to throw out of our bombers en route to the target to confuse the enemy radar. We would also pass camouflaged airfields and aircraft that had been pushed back into the trees. By this late date in the war the German Luftwaffe was pretty much out of action due to lack of spare parts and limited fuel. Our air raids from Italy and England had apparently done their jobs.

As we got farther west we began to see more air activity from the allied aircraft. We were strafed several times by British fighter-bombers. When we saw them coming we would all scatter from the roads into the ditches and trees, if there were any, and hoped for the best. It took quite a long time to get us all gathered up again and to make sure that the count was correct, and then march on.

Finally we realized that we were doing it all wrong. We eventually developed a new reaction when we were about to be strafed. We knew it would be best to stand our ground in tight formation and wave frantically at the approaching aircraft. The idea being, an enemy would naturally scatter for protection, but friendly troops would wave to the fighters as a welcoming sight. It worked. From then on the aircraft would swoop down low to see us, report back to base on our movement and location. At this point in the war it must have been obvious that prisoners were being moved in large numbers and it was logical to take note of it. In any case it worked for us, most of the time anyway. In fact we should have realized that the IRC would be informing the allies of our movements.

The one time that our plan backfired was not long after we crossed the Elbe River while westbound. British fighters strafed us while we were stopped in the woods. We were all right, but the poor team of horses that were pulling our ration wagon was not so lucky, they were both killed. In some ways this was a godsend for us because we all fell on the carcasses with our knives (butter knives) and soon there was nothing left but the bones. It was a rare thing to have a little meat. Some we cooked, some we boiled, and some we ate raw.

We ate anything that we could beg or steal: raw sugar beets, kohlrabies, rutabagas, cabbage, potatoes, and any kind grain, all of which were rarely available. We would build small campfires when we could find enough dry twigs and small branches. But most of the roadside had already been picked clean by the local Germans or other POW groups that had passed by.

Very few tried to escape for several reasons, first, we left camp in the middle of the winter and survival on the land with no language capability would have been difficult, if not impossible. Second, the mood of the people was such that we could not expect help from anyone. In fact, had the local people taken us, we would have most likely been killed when they found out that we were American airmen as we were the ones bombing their homes and country. Third, by now it was very evident that the war was close to ending and thus we would be liberated. Lastly, most of us were too sick and weak to do anything except stay with our own kind for mutual support and encouragement. Actually, it was safer to stay with our guards. As we traveled through the destroyed areas they were more of a protection than anything else. As the western air activity increased, we sensed a change in attitude of our guards. They began to be more protective than abusive.

By now the weather had started to moderate as it was approaching spring and we had moved south of the cold Baltic Sea. Our blisters had turned to calluses. We were weak but hardened over the long journey. Besides the hunger that was always with us, dysentery and the strength sapping lice and fleas were our biggest nuisance. We were to roast our potato rations instead of boiling them until they were black about half way through. This added charcoal to our meager diet, which helped those with mild symptoms of the dystentery.

Early spring brought with it rain and mud. Europe is not known for it's pleasant weather and this spring was no exception. We remained cold and wet most of the time. It is amazing that more of us did not succumb to pneumonia and other diseases due to our poor condition.

We arrived at Stalag XI B in Oerbke, near Fallingbostal, on the 7<sup>th</sup> of April 1945. The camp was already overflowing with allied POW's, however, there were few aircrew members like us. We were put in tents and were glad to have finally

reached the end of our long journey. There was a lot of confusion, new rumors, and a mixture of guards. We hoped that this was where we would stay until the war was over.

More food was available and we received a slight increase in IRC food parcels. The German rations were still minimal. There just wasn't very much in the way of food anywhere in Germany. The weather had turned mild and spring was really here. We would gather dandelion greens where we could and when they were boiled they tasted very much like spinach.

Our hopes of staying in Stalag XI B did not last long, and we prepared ourselves to move on again. We left camp a week later, the 14<sup>th</sup> of April, heading back the same way that we had come. We now had a mixture of guards and POW's, but essentially the same makeup of march columns as we had before.

Later we found out that Hitler had sent out an order, in a fit of anger, to have the Wehrmacht shoot all POW's. The military were not fools and refused to carry out this insane order. They knew full well what the repercussions would be if they did. They realized that their safety now depended on our safety. So they were very careful to see that we stayed clear of any problems in the areas that we were traversing. We were the bargaining chips for their survival. They knew it, and they knew that we knew it also.

Our line of march was somewhat confusing this time. Some days we would remain in place and on other days we would move only a few kilometers. Our direction was also different. It zigzagged back and forth, but generally in a northeast direction. We were now in the British area of operations and they had apparently been reporting our location each day as they returned to their bases in England. I found out later that after completing their missions inland, they would locate the various columns on their return, swoop low wagging their wings, and were able to keep our military advised as to our location and apparent condition.

We were not far from the front lines now and could hear artillery fire most of the time. There were German units moving around us in all directions. One day we were laying over in a group of smaller barns along side of a river where there was a lot of German activity. Anti aircraft gun emplacements were being dug in and an engineer unit was frantically trying to put a pontoon bridge across the river because most of the bridges in that area were blown. Most of us just stood around and watched as we saw the work in progress. All of a sudden there was a lot of shouting, honking of vehicle horns, and increased activity in the gun pits. Four British Typhoon fighter-bombers came in low, firing their guns and dropping their bombs. Of course they were receiving fire from the gun pits in return. All of this was within 25 yards of us. We all dove back into the stone barns and buried ourselves as best we could under the straw. When all of the excitement stopped and the shooting stopped we ventured outside and saw the remains of the pontoon bridge slowly floating downstream. That was as close as I ever wanted to be to that sort of action.

We continued to move in a generally northward direction through many small towns. We had a lot of layovers now. It seemed to us that if the front moved, we moved. If the front was going to be stationary for the day we did not move. It soon became evident that we were being kept by our guards, who were by now operating pretty much on their own, as

bargaining chips when things would finally come to an end.

It seemed so strange to be here, just behind the enemy lines. Especially now as the FEBA (Forward Edge of the Battle Area) or as it was sometimes called, MLR (Main Line of Resistance) was so close. It was almost like an out of body experience, being a witness to all of this activity, and from the wrong side of the line. It was almost as if we were the umpires and referees in a massive, real-life or death, football game, not having any impact on the way the "game" went, or how it would end.

It was the 1<sup>st</sup> of May and it looked like we would soon be liberated. By now I really didn't much care. I was suffering a great deal from bloating and dysentery and just sick in general. I'm sure that I really did "much care," it was just that feeling so bad I could not but wonder if, after all I had suffered through, I was not going to be able to make it.

On the 1<sup>st</sup> of May our column was laying over at a dairy farm somewhere in the vicinity of Zarrentin, when the farmer failed to take his milk to town the next morning we started to get very excited. There were several hasty conferences held between the German officer in charge, the farmer and our column NCO. It did not take long for the rumor to spread and we sensed that at long last we were going to be free.

By late morning of May 2<sup>nd</sup> it was obvious that we would not be marching any more. Our German Captain, his sergeant, and our NCO walked toward the town, about 2 KM away. They were carrying a white flag waving from a stick. Our reaction was rather unusual; at least it seemed so to me. We

## SECURITY



## Now Hiring Full-Time Split Shift & Part-Time: Transportation Security Officers Salt Lake City International Airport

*Officers provide security and protection for air travelers, airports and aircraft.*

**Full-Time Split Shift: Starting at \$27,652 per year Plus Benefits**

**Part-Time: Starting at \$13.25 per hour Plus Benefits**

*(Includes 13.18% Locality Pay)*

**TSA will pay the maximum government contribution for health benefits under the TSA Health Benefit Incentive for part-time TSOs. All part-time TSOs will pay the same lower cost for federal health benefits as full-time employees.**

**Minimum Requirements: U.S. Citizenship or U.S. National • High school diploma, GED or equivalent, or one year of security or aviation screening experience • English proficiency • Pre-employment medical evaluation • Pass a background/credit check**

Please apply online at:

**www.tsajobs.com**

**1-800-887-1895**

**TTY: 1-800-887-5506**



**Transportation  
Security  
Administration**

TSA is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

all got very quiet, didn't move around much, and what little talking that occurred was done in almost a murmur. Our guards were also quite subdued, remaining well away from us as we milled around the farmyard.

About two hours later one of our lookouts up in the hayloft in the barn shouted down to us that there were a British half-track and a land rover bearing down on us from the direction of the town. When they pulled into the yard all hell broke loose. A roar went up from all of us. Our German captain surrendered to the British officer and we were free! And, strangely enough, our guards were cheering too. We relieved them of their weapons, and for them the war was over too. We drank all of the farmer's milk, and of course it made us all happily sick (er).

We were told by the British officer to make our own way to the rear of the lines, about 4 or 5 kilometers, where a field kitchen had been set up. They knew of our coming and were preparing a special meal for us; a real, full, cooked meal! We moved to the rear in independent small groups casting off old packs and extra things that we could not have lived without during the march. It seemed very strange to be on the other side of the line now and to be mingling with the British soldiers moving forward to the front lines. We were fed until we could eat no more, and in true Kriegie fashion stuffed biscuits in our pockets for fear that we would never see them again.

We were told that field showers had been set up nearby and we headed for them. There was hot water - lots of real hot water, GI soap, and a stiff brush and I stayed in the shower for about 30 minutes. The British had us pile all of our clothes in a pile; they then poured on gasoline and burned them while we cheered from the showers. After the shower we were issued scratchy British wool uniforms. They dusted us with lots of delousing powder and told us to head for the rear where we could find transportation back to our countrymen.

We began to wander all over the place as we gradually moved to the rear and south. A small group of us raided a cheese factory in the village of Gudow and loaded as many of the large rounds of cheese as we could on a wagon that we commandeered. We found a poor team of horses, had the farmer harness them and hook them to our wagon.

We began to drive up and down the roadway throwing large hunks of cheese to the EX-POW's. We wandered around for several days, helping ourselves to what we needed, or wanted, which really wasn't very much. The local people in that area were quite subdued, seeming almost as relieved as us that it was finally over. They gave us no trouble and I supposed that they hoped that we would not give them any. The little activity that was still going on was way forward of where we were now, and we were glad of it.

My condition continued to deteriorate and I was getting more and more bloated. Dysentery was now giving me a lot of discomfort and it began to dampen my enthusiasm a lot.

We began to gather around an abandoned Luftwaffe airfield where we were told that the American Air Corps would soon be by to pick us up. We hung around there for a couple of days waiting for our ride. On the 8<sup>th</sup> of May we were told that the war was officially over! We had found several Very pistols and a supply of shells at the airfield and that night kept the sky lit up with the flares celebrating our liberation and the end of the war.

The following day I was really getting sick. I was so bloated that I could not button even one button on my pants. I had to keep them up with a piece of rope over my shoulders sort of like suspenders. Finally several "gooney birds", C-47s landed at the airfield with American markings on them. We were separated into groups, my group was the one with the sick, which was loaded on the C-47 enroute to a hospital in France. We all gave a cheer as we took off and said farewell to a nightmare that was to continue to haunt most of us for many years to come; and for some, the rest of our lives.

We landed at an airfield not far from the city of Saint-Quentin where an American hospital was located. As we drove in a ambulance from the airfield to the hospital the sight of the American flag flying over the base brought tears to my eyes. I cannot express the feeling of security and love of country and countrymen, that emblem brings to us who have been denied its protection for so long. I was there for about two weeks and was able to get the care that I needed. I weighed about 90 pounds when I checked into the hospital. My diet was closely monitored for the first week, but then as I began to respond I was given more substantial meals.

After two weeks recuperating in that hospital I was flown to Camp Lucky Strike near LeHavre, France where I waited for a week before I was called to join to board a liberty ship to Norfolk, Virginia.

After arriving at Norfolk I was given some back pay. American greenbacks looked funny to me, and hearing English spoken everywhere sounded strange, but good. I was placed on a special POW train that was headed west, dropping off EX-POW's all along the way.

I got off the train in Salt Lake City and bought a bus ticket for Bear River City. When I got off the bus one of the townspeople gave me a ride across the Bear River to my home. No one was home, except the dog. My family was up the road to my uncle's farm, but they soon returned home to find me standing in the doorway. We had a tearful and joyful reunion. I was glad to be home, safe and sound at last. It was the 15<sup>th</sup> of June 1945. I was 20 years old. —

### Marine Corps League: State Convention

The Lt. Serge B. Simmons Detachment #1159 of the Marine Corps League, Ogden, Utah will be hosting the 4th Annual Convention of The Department of Utah, Marine Corps League, Inc. at the Best Western High Country Inn (Jeremiah's Restaurant), 1335 W. 12th Street, Ogden Utah on 6,7,8 June 2008. At the same event, the PFC James Jay Williams Unit #445, Marine Corps League Auxiliary will be hosting the 1st Annual Convention for the Department Of Utah, Marine Corps League Auxiliary.

**Be Our Messenger: Volunteer at the George E. Wahlen VA Medical Center for Info Call (801) 584-1241**

**The Disable American Veterans Sponsors a Van that runs throughout the region transporting Veterans to their appointments at the George Wahlen VA Medical Center and then back home. To schedule an appointment with the Van call the following number: 1-800-613-4012 EXT: 2003**

**VAN TIMES AND LOCATIONS**

**NORTHERN ROUTE**

02:15 AM—**SAGE JUNCTION** (EXIT 33 OFF FREEWAY 1-15)  
 02:45 AM—**ASHTON** (DAVE'S JUBILEE GROCERY STORE)  
 03:15 AM—**ST. ANTHONY** (MAVERICK STATION) (S. BRIDGE ST. AND 3<sup>RD</sup> S.)  
 03:45 AM—**REXBURG** (MAVERICK STATION) (MAIN ST. AND SECOND WEST)  
 04:15 AM—**RIGBY** (MAVERICK STATION MAIN AND CLARK ST.)  
 04:45 AM—**IDAHO FALLS** (CHEVRON and McDONALDS) (BROADWAY AND SATURN)  
 05:15 AM—**BLACKFOOT** (FLYING J) (228 PARKWAY DR)  
 05:30 AM—**FORT HALL** (GAS STATION BY CASINO)

**SOUTHERN ROUTE**

05:45 AM—**POCATELLO** (VET CENTER 1800 GARRET WAY) (WESTWOOD VILLAGE MALL)  
 06:15 AM—**McCAMMON** (FLYING J) (BY FREEWAY 1-15)  
 06:30 AM—**DOWNEY** (FLAGS WEST TRUCK STOP) (OFF FREEWAY 1-15)  
 06:45 AM—**MALAD** (CHEVRON STATION) (EXIT 13 OFF FREEWAY 1-15)  
 07:15 AM—**TREMONTON** (SINCLAIR STATION) (EXIT 40 OFF HIGHWAY 84)  
 07:35 AM—**BRIGHAM CITY** (FLYING J EXIT 362 OFF 1-15)

*ARRIVAL AT VA HOSPITAL IS BETWEEN 08:30 TO 09:00 APPOINTMENTS MUST BE BETWEEN 09:00 TO 14:00*

*THE VAN DEPARTS HOSPITAL WHEN THE LAST VETERAN IS DONE*

**2008 VAN SCHEDULE FOR  
IDAHO, PRICE and  
ST. GEORGE**

FOR APPOINTMENTS CALL:

IDAHO: (208) 221-0362

PRICE, ST. GEORGE : 1-800-613-4012

x. 2003

APRIL 2, 4, 8, 10, 14,  
16, 18, 22, 24, 28, 30  
MAY 2, 6, 8, 12, 14,  
16, 20, 22, 28, 30  
JUNE 3, 5, 9, 11, 13,  
17, 19, 23, 25, 27  
JULY 1, 3, 7, 9, 11, 15,  
17, 21, 23, 25, 29, 31  
AUGUST 4, 6, 8, 12, 14,  
18, 20, 22, 26, 28  
SEPTEMBER 3, 5, 9, 11,  
15, 17, 19, 23, 25, 29

**2008 VAN SCHEDULE FOR  
LOGAN, VERNAL, ELKO,  
ELY, AFTON, ROCK SPRINGS**

FOR APPOINTMENTS CALL:

LOGAN AND VERNAL: 1-800-613-4012

x2003

APRIL 1, 3, 7, 9, 11,  
15, 17, 21, 23, 25, 29  
MAY 1, 5, 7, 9, 13, 15,  
19, 21, 23, 27, 29  
JUNE 2, 4, 6, 10, 12,  
16, 18, 20, 24, 26, 30  
JULY 2, 8, 10, 14, 16, 18,  
22, 24, 28, 30  
AUGUST 1, 5, 7, 11, 13,  
15, 19, 21, 25, 27, 29  
SEPTEMBER 2, 4, 8, 10,  
12, 16, 18, 22, 24, 26, 30