



The Iowa Compatriot

The Journal of the Iowa Society, Sons of the American Revolution

June 4, 2018

We the descendants of the heroes of the American Revolution, who by their sacrifice established the United States of America, reaffirm our faith in the principles of liberty and solemnly pledge to defend them against every foe.

SAR Remembers Those Who Served

On this Memorial Day, we remembered those who fought in America's wars and preserved American freedom.



The gravesite of **Major Benjamin Bell**, decorated by Compatriot **Chuck Mullen** is in Vegors Cemetery near Stratford Iowa. SAR Central Iowa Chapter President **Mike Rowley** decorated War of 1812 Veteran **James A. White's** grave at Woodland Cemetery, Des Moines.





Des Moines' Lost Tradition of Decoration Day

by Gerald LaBlanc

The Des Moines Register, May 25, 2016

When I was a young boy, Decoration Day was a sacred day with most stores closed here in Des Moines. Dad would gas up the car the day before as all gas stations closed. However, my brother and I always looked forward to Decoration Day as an adventure at Des Moines Woodland Cemetery, especially since schools were closed for the day.

The first Decoration Day here in Des Moines happened to be on a Thursday — May 30, 1868. Federal law had set May 30 for the observation. The first Decoration Day in 1868 saw a huge parade down Locust Street, which became a yearly tradition. I had joined the Iowa National Guard and marched in the last Decoration Day on May 30, 1946. Des Moines has never had a Memorial Day parade. The setting of Memorial Day on the last Monday in May was done by design to create a three day holiday. Today, if you were to ask a youth what Memorial Day means, he would reply, “the opening of the local swimming pool.”

Our family would arrive at Des Moines Woodland Cemetery's closed gates at about 8:30 a.m. Soon, two very expensive cars would pull up with their tops down, carrying some very old Civil War veterans. With the gates opened, we all gathered at the Civil War cemetery in Woodland for services.

I found their speeches rather boring. But, to compensate, came roaring booms from two cannons on Woodland Avenue. Members of the Daughters of the American Revolution placed a flower on each Civil War grave. The services ended with the playing of taps.

Like all the others, we brought a basket of food, flowers and a blanket. We then went directly to my grandparents' graves. My brother and I went to get water for our mother's flowers. In those days, all of the water faucets were working. After bringing the water, my brother and I knew there would be magic. My mother placed blue dye in the water along with the iris flowers. We watched with fascination as the flowers turned blue. It was the custom for families to bring flowers from their own yards.

After placing the flowers on my grandparents' graves, we sat down on the blanket for a picnic. After the picnic, we went around to many of the monuments to see how graves were decorated. My parents knew many of the families, and they would visit. At that point, my brother and I would slip out and play leap frog.

The highlight that I looked forward to as we sat on the blanket after the picnic were stories the old folks would tell of long ago. They would tell of leaving the old country by boat, and how they found Des Moines with its dirt and muddy roads. They were tearful as they showed pictures of their three babies who had died because of Iowa's cold winters.

In 1961, Mayor John Pat Dorrian appointed me as Woodland's first tour guide. Today, at old Woodland with its thousands of graves, there are just a very few flowers on Memorial Day as the younger generation has taken advantage of the three-day weekend. What ruined the old tradition of families going to Woodland to decorate graves and have picnics ended with the death of Decoration Day. In all my many years as a tour guide, I seldom, if ever, saw children. It is sad to end such an old-fashioned tradition.

Annual Spring Conference

Thirty-five Compatriots and guests attended the IASSAR Annual Spring Conference on Saturday, June 2, at the DMACC-Newton Conference Center.



Candy Brown, Chair of the Jean Marie Cardinell Chapter of the Iowa Society D.A.R., spoke about our Vietnam era veterans and their families. She presented Vietnam Veteran Lapel Pins to veterans **Dick Webb** of Ames, **Larry Magee** of Middle Amana, **David Shannon** of Newton, and **Don Corrigan** of Des Moines. Awarding the pin is meant “to recognize, thank, and honor United States military veterans who served during the Vietnam War.”



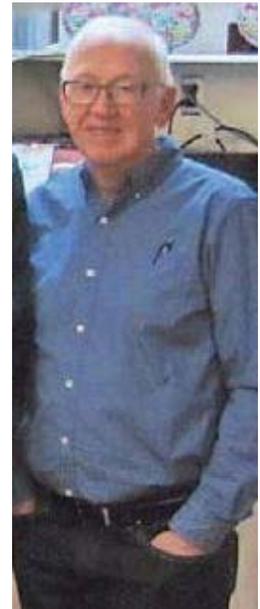
Eagle Scout Isaac Van Beek, IASSAR state winner of the King Eagle Scout Competition, was honored for his outstanding record in Scouting and for service to his community. Isaac also placed in the top ten in national SAR competition. Eagle Scout Chair **Doug Frazer** and IASSAR President **Alan Wenger** presented Isaac with his awards.



Iowa Society Children of the American Revolution
President Elect **Alexander Pezley** discussed the President's State Project for this year. He is selling pins to raise money for the Iowa Veterans Home garden (in Marshalltown).

Lee Barnett, of McCall Monument in Newton and Des Moines, spoke about some of the historical work and restoration his company has performed in Iowa

IASSAR Secretary-Treasurer **George DeMoss** was honored by Central Iowa Chapter President **Mike Rowley** and IASSAR State President **Alan Wenger**. For his outstanding contribution to the state society, George was awarded the IASSAR Distinguished Service Medal.



Following committee reports presented by IASSAR Secretary-Treasurer George DeMoss and Youth Awards Coordinator Doug Frazer, elections for IASSAR office were held.

President	Doug Frazer
2nd VP	Kevin Parmenter
Secretary-Treasurer	Daniel Green
Assistant Registrar	Mike Rowley
Chancellor	Lance Ehmcke
Webmaster	Patrick Lant
Newsletter Editor	Doug Frazer
Youth Awards Chair	Doug Frazer
Historian	Doug Frazer

Have you looked at the IASSAR Website Lately? Stay up-to-date with all IASSAR activities. www.iassar.org

Contribute to *The Iowa Compatriot!*

This is your newsletter, covering all activities and programs of the IASSAR. To keep it alive and vibrant, we need you to contribute stories about SAR events happening in your part of the state. The stories need not be long. However, they do need to reflect the ideals of the SAR, and how our Iowa compatriots support them. Sharing what we do will help unify our membership. Please send your stories to me. We'd love to print your photos as well! My email address is dlfrazer@yahoo.com. If you would prefer to use the USPS to mail your news items and photos, address them to me at:

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*Let us remember our obligation to our forefathers, who gave us our Constitution,
The Bill of Rights, an independent Supreme Court and a nation of free men.*