



The Iowa Compatriot

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

June 17, 2023

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.

“Ride to the Wall” to Honor Our American Veterans

By Randy Lyon



On May 22nd, I had the distinct honor to represent the Iowa Society of the SAR and the Iowa City Veterans Hospital Volunteer Committee. The occasion was a visit from a unique group of approximately 40 veterans which annually commits itself to remembering our veterans and raising the spirit of those who are hospitalized.

The mission of the NVAO is to remember, honor, and support veterans and those currently serving in all branches of the military. This is accomplished through local activities for veterans and participation in the National Veterans Awareness Ride (NVAR)

The NVAR (“Ride to the Wall”) is a 13-day event held annually in May in which motorcycle riders who are themselves veterans ride from Auburn, California, to Washington, D.C. with many stops in between.

The three parts of the ride are:

1. Daily visits to veteran homes and hospitals to remind them they are not alone.
2. Participation in memorial services, laying wreaths, and showing respect for the veterans who have come before us.
3. Visiting schools and talking with students about giving back to their communities, serving our nation, and respecting military veterans.



We had a great time. The picture above includes a small group of the veterans along with the director of volunteer services (standing next to me) at the Iowa City Veterans Hospital. Visiting with a member from Iowa, I found that he rode his motorcycle all the way to California so that he could participate in the entire ride. One member in this year’s group had participated in all 14 rides. It was commonly mentioned that it is not an event to lose weight: “Everyone wants to feed you.” After a brief welcome by hospital staff, the riders broke into groups to visit patients in the hospital.

As I work with veterans, I find there are many support groups for these brave Americans. It was an honor to meet another.

The SAR and SUVCW Salute Honor Flight Participants

By Randy Lyon



Family, friends, combat veterans of the Vietnam War, and several other groups joined Dennis Geesaman, Larry Hoelscher, and Randy Lyon at the Dubuque Regional Airport on May 22nd to welcome approximately 100 veterans of all America's wars back from an amazing day in Washington, D.C. Blessed with exceptionally fine weather in Dubuque and Washington, D.C., the participants and their guides visited many of the memorials with particular emphasis on plenty of time at the Vietnam Memorial Wall.

Many of those going knew the names of people with whom they had served who had been killed. One of the favorite activities of those going was to make a pencil and paper rubbing of these names as a keepsake. I've seen several of these displayed at class reunions.



We returned the next night on May 23rd to welcome back a second flight of about 100 veterans. Dennis was wearing his SUVCW sergeant's uniform. I learned from him that the hats were exactly like those worn in the War of 1812 except for the tilt created at the front. The extra space provided room for carrying letters or snacks.

The combat veterans have a large collection of flags making it easy for anyone who wants to hold a flag to have one. Larry suggested that we should have a flag with 13 stars for such occasions as well as parades.

Veterans Way Ribbon Cutting Ceremony

By David Nation



David Nation, Randy Lyon, and Larry Hoelscher represented the Iowa SAR on May 25th at the ribbon cutting of the inaugural Waterloo Veterans Way banners. An article about the ribbon cutting ceremony was later featured in *The Courier* on May 28th. 42 veterans from the Cedar Valley were honored with banners attached to light poles on several blocks of 4th Street on the east and west sides of the river in Waterloo.

A website that includes biographies of the veterans honored explains the project: "Banners honoring veterans and members of the military proudly hang along 4th Street in downtown Waterloo from Memorial Day in the spring to Veterans Day in late fall. Banners are sponsored annually by family members, friends, businesses, and organizations and are presented to them at the end of the season, making room for a new group of honorees."

David Nation sponsored a banner for his uncle Lloyd "Bub" Loonan, who served in the Army during WWII and landed on Omaha Beach on D-Day.



Larry Hoelscher, Randy Lyon, David Nation, and Waterloo East High School Junior ROTC members present the Colors at the Veterans Way ribbon cutting ceremony in Waterloo

Memorial Day Recap

By Mike Rowley



Memorial day Color Guard participation began at 5 a.m. at Camp Dodge in Johnston, Iowa. The event was an open house broadcast on 1040 WHO radio station. Color Guard member Mike Rowley was joined by other honor guards and veterans of all eras. Also in attendance were Iowa Governor Kim Reynolds, US Congressman Zach Nunn, a couple of 2024 presidential candidates, and over 3,000 citizen visitors.

At 9:30 a.m., the Color Guard moved to Glendale cemetery and stood vigil at the flag pole in the GAR section until one o'clock. Car counters would record over 5,000 vehicles that day, many stopping to take a photo and to express their appreciation to the SAR.



Next stop was Woodland cemetery for the laying of flower petals on the graves in the GAR section. This has been a tradition of the women's relief corps for over 100 years.



Pinehill Cemetery Featured on We Are Iowa Local 5 News

Mike Rowley appeared on We Are Iowa Local 5 News for a segment about the eight veteran graves that were recently marked at Pinehill Cemetery in Des Moines. For the full story, go to:

<https://www.weareiowa.com/article/news/national/military-news/fallen-soldiers-va-veterans-affairs-des-moines-cemetery-unclaimed-remains-headstones/524-dd8e6853-129e-460e-bc42-6fab89c2abba>



Mike Rowley appears in an interview for We Are Iowa Local 5 News at Pinehill Cemetery

Waterloo Memorial Day Parade

By David Lang and David Nation



David Lang and David Nation participated in the 2023 Memorial Day Parade in Waterloo, Iowa. They walked alongside the Cedar Falls Chapter of the DAR. David Lang's wife, Lisa, is a member of the CFDAR.

David Nation appeared on the front page of *The Courier* as well as on KWWL News.



Memorial Day Parade in Dubuque

By Larry Hoelscher

It is the first of its kind in three years marking the solemn Memorial Day holiday at Dubuque's Schmitt Island. It was a renewal of the Monday morning remembrance for "those who didn't have the chance to take the uniform off." The parade featured marching bands from schools, scout troops, and motorcycles with flags flying.

This holiday was first known as Decoration Day, which was a day to beautify the graves of those who lost their lives while serving the country. While the holiday name has changed over the years, the ideals have not!



Randy Lyon and I spoke with many who came to the ceremony and thanked us for wearing our Revolution uniforms. We stood with the Veterans Honor Guard during the speeches and the gun salute.

Bay Church Decoration Day Celebration

By Larry Hoelscher

Iowa SAR members attended the Decoration Day service at the Bay Church cemetery laying flowers on the graves of the fallen as they did on May 30th, 1866. The Civil War monument (the first such monument in Iowa) had been erected and dedicated the previous August (1865) in memory of the 14 young men from the area who had given their lives in the great conflict.



Dennis Geesaman worked the cannon, Karl Geesaman read the Gettysburg address, John Pregler read the history of the Civil War, and Matt Schwalm, Randy Lyon, and Larry Hoelscher were in the Color Guard procession.

The Bay Church and Monument are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Church was established in 1846 as the first Free Will Baptist Church in Iowa.



Left to right: Larry Hoelscher, Randy Lyon, Karl Geesaman, Dennis Geesaman, John Pregler, and Matt Schwalm

Army Veteran, Educator, and Friend Remembered

By Randy Lyon

Rudy Bellman served from 1957 until 1960 in the United States Army. He received his teaching degree from Loras College before joining the staff of the Dubuque Community School District where he taught at the secondary level until 1997. Upon his retirement from teaching, he and his wife founded *The Golden View Newspaper*.

Rudy was active at St. Joseph the Worker Parish and served on the board of Mental Health America, and later on the board of Envision Mental Health. He was inducted into the Loras College National Catholic Basketball Hall of Fame for his work on the tournament. In 2009, he was named, along with his wife, outstanding volunteer fundraisers for the Tri-State Chapter of the Association of Fundraising Professionals. Rudy donated many gallons of blood over the years, giving every three months.

Compatriots Larry Hoelscher and I knew Rudy for many years during his career in education and later as a friend we repeatedly met scurrying around the community on one of his many missions. He had a wonderful smile and always had time for a chat. On June 1st, 2023, Larry and I had the honor of being in the Color Guard at his funeral. He will be greatly missed.



Along With Your Cup of Coffee... Have You Had a Family Tree Written?

By Randy Lyon

It may be a classic example of the old “bait and switch” technique, but it does the trick!

Part of my volunteer work at the Dubuque Veterans Clinic is offering a cup of coffee to patients. While pouring a cup, I bring up the topic of whether the person has ever had a family history developed - for free! Quite a few veterans have never had one done and literally jump at the opportunity.

The idea originated prior to the pandemic with Ancestry.com and the SAR. Initially, volunteers were asked to work with veterans who were waiting for their appointments. A website was developed which allowed veterans to input their information at home from their own computers. They could also wait until their next appointment to work with the volunteer at the hospital or clinic.

My change has been to offer the veteran the opportunity to give me his name and address along with his parents' names and hometowns. With this information, I develop a family tree for them and save it to a thumb drive. They can pick up the thumb drive on a future appointment at the clinic or I send it to them. I include charts linking them to ancestors in the Civil War, War of 1812, or the Revolutionary War. Depending upon a lot of variables, each family tree contains at least 400 names.

I include my card if they wish to pursue memberships and would like my help. It's important that my assistance is not considered “selling” memberships. Many of our veterans cannot afford membership dues. The charts I provide give them a feeling of pride. For privacy, I erase their information from my computer the minute I send them a thumb drive.

I make sure to explain that having a family tree and actually proving your links between generations are two different things, but it doesn't seem to matter. Actually seeing their position on a web of humanity seems enough to many. My four to six hours of volunteer work daily seems to disappear once I begin.



Revolutionary War Rarities: A Gem of a Podcast from the SAR

By Randy Lyon

Every once in a while there is an amazing program you can hardly wait to recommend to others. Such a program is “Revolutionary War Rarities.” Available on YouTube, it is now into episode #24, which involved where expression we continue to use developed during the American Revolution period.

1. “Worth an arm and a leg”
This expression involved the price paid for a painting. Most paintings were made only of the head and shoulders. To include arms and legs significantly raised the cost of the finished work.
2. “Putting your best foot forward”
Men at the time commonly made a small bow by placing one foot (considered their best) forward and bowing slightly.
3. “Sleep tight”
Mattresses were commonly held in place with ropes underneath. If the ropes became loose, sleep became increasingly difficult. Pulling the ropes tight again solved the problem.
4. “Saved by the bell”
The fear of being buried alive was common, especially when coffins that were moved were often found to have claw marks on the inside of the lids. One method to prevent this was to drill a hole through the side of the coffin. A string was tied to the wrist of the “corpse” and then fed through the hole and tied to the branch of a nearby tree before the grave was filled. If the bell rang, the “corpse” was quickly dug up. To hear for the possible ringing of a bell, someone sat next to the grave all night. This created the expression “graveyard shift.” A person who was saved from premature burial was known as a “dead ringer.”

5. "Feather in your cap"

Feathers were often awarded for valor in battle. These were proudly worn in a soldier's cap.

You can access episode #24 at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i9eYOupevwo> and then subscribe to the service at no cost. Treat yourself today!

Flag Certificate Presentations in Dubuque, Iowa

By Randy Lyon



Ethel Schwartz appreciated the effort made by the Iowa Society in the flag presentation program and wished us well.



Corinna Merchant laughed that she could not believe what she was seeing on her doorbell camera and just had to "check it out." She appreciated our efforts.



Repeated efforts to contact Robert Severson were not successful. I found a safe place for the certificate at his front door.



Travis James commented like so many others that wind damage was a real problem with flags. His flag recently had to be replaced.



Thomas Weber was just about to leave when I caught him. He was surprised by the man motioning him to stop, the outfit this man was wearing, and being honored for flying the flag.

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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.*