



# The Iowa Compatriot

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

May 15, 2024

*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.*

## Veterans Town Hall

By Gary Everding

Some time ago, while dining at the Waverly Pizza Ranch, my wife and I became aware of some young students clearing tables. We noticed how courteous and dedicated they were to their tasks. A lady working as their chaperone, Cassie Hales, provided us a brochure. It explained why they were working—to fund their Washington D.C. trip in November. As a result, we learned of Lisa Alexander.

Lisa Alexander, Capstone Project Coordinator of St. Paul's Lutheran Elementary School, extended invitations to veterans to participate in a Veterans Town Hall panel scheduled for April 5<sup>th</sup>, 2024. It was for the benefit of the fifth and sixth graders at the school. Tamela Johnson, Principal, Becky Adams, sixth-grade teacher, Stephanie Rieckenberg, fifth-grade teacher, and Cassie Hales, Ministry Coordinator, all helped the students to organize the event for about 50 people.

The Veterans Town Hall is a product of their Legacy Program. It focuses on the legacy left by so many and their sacrifices to ensure our freedoms. This intergenerational approach incorporates our nation's history from those who have served. The sixth-grade students incorporate what they have learned and apply it to the memorials they visit on their Washington D.C. trip.

There are significant efforts of fund raising by this group. These funds not only help offset the cost of the trip, but also teaches trips such as theirs are not free. It takes a concerted effort and hard work by them to raise the money necessary for this opportunity. They also ensure no students are ever denied the opportunity to make the D.C. trip due to financial reasons.

The panel of veterans for the Veterans Town Hall were:

- Ted Funk, U.S. Army veteran during Vietnam
- Ron Feekes, USMC sniper during Vietnam and author
- Gary Everding, USAF Security Police during Vietnam
- John Johnston, U.S. Army veteran during Vietnam



Sixth-grade students with panelists (seated) left to right: Ted Funk, Ron Feekes, Gary Everding, and John Johnston



*Looking through Gary Everding's Purple Heart project book. Left to right: Ron Feekes, (USMC sniper and author of "Through the Eyes of a Snake"), Ted Funk, and Gary Everding*

## **Volunteers to Veterans Third Quarterly Meeting Brings Opportunities**

By Randy Lyon

As a volunteer representing the SAR on the Veterans Hospital board, I found the third annual meeting one with lots of opportunities. The primary focus was a new approach to medicine at both the VA Hospital and its satellite clinics in Iowa. It is a Whole Health Approach which incorporates self-care, professional care, community, and "mindful" (me) awareness. Put simply, this approach focuses on a holistic approach to patient care with emphasis on the patient's needs. As one presenter said, "This is—What matters to you instead of what is the matter with you." The more positive focus is to encourage the patient to rely more on "self" vs the approach that everything important can be determined by a series of pre-examination laboratory tests.

In other great news, Iowa City will soon be the recipient of a Fisher House. One if not THE primary provider of free housing for families of veterans in the hospital, Fisher Houses are nationwide. A Four-Star Charity with Charity Navigator, Fisher House will be a wonderful addition to Iowa City.

## **Installation of Three Gravestones in New Hampton**

By Mike Rowley



On Sunday, April 21<sup>st</sup>, SAR members traveled to New Hampton, Iowa, to install military gravestones from the VA on the graves of three Civil War veterans that had never been marked.

The Iowa SAR was assisted in the markings by Air Force veteran and New Hampton resident Nettie Hendricks who, along with cemetery sexton Kevin Ira, have submitted an additional five more applications to the VA.



## Earth Day Activities at Hoyt Sherman Place

By Mike Rowley

Several members of Dodge Camp 75 Iowa Department of the SUCVW joined with a General Grant reenactor to take part in an Earth Day (April 22<sup>nd</sup>) tree planting at Hoyt Sherman (brother of William T. Sherman) Place in Des Moines, Iowa.

The trees were grown from cuttings collected from trees that were planted in the early spring of 1865 at Oak Ridge Cemetery in Springfield, IL. These trees witnessed the funeral procession of President Lincoln.

Pictured at right are Camp Commander Mike Rowley, John Liepa of the Des Moines Civil War Round Table, and a General Grant reenactor.



## Book Signing at the Franklin Avenue Library

By Randy Lyon

On April 29<sup>th</sup>, Randy Lyon and Kevin Parmenter enjoyed a beautiful afternoon in Des Moines with Mike Rowley, a newly minted co-author! Mike's book signing at the Franklin Avenue Library was attended by numerous people known to others in the community and dozens of local friends. Lines of eager autograph collectors assured that neither author would escape consuming aspirin later that evening for writers' hand cramp.

The book, *Woodland Cemetery in Des Moines: A History*, was written by Mary Christopher and Mike Rowley. All proceeds from the book sales will go to the cemetery, which prides itself on its care and programs offered to the community.



Left to right: Iowa SAR members Randy Lyon, Mike Rowley, and Kevin Parmenter

## Award Presentations at the University of Iowa ROTC Breakfast

By Randy Lyon



The War of 1812 Award of Merit was presented to Jake Booker on May 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2024. The Iowa National Guard Armory in Iowa City was again the host of the University of Iowa ROTC Breakfast.

An estimated 150 cadets were in attendance with five presenters outside the military staff at the university. Academic excellence and leadership qualities were stressed along with physical fitness.

Jake is the treasurer of the Veterans Association of Iowa and is a business major.

I was expecting to make one presentation at the ROTC annual awards breakfast, but found my name read again! I was asked to make an SAR presentation to Griffin Thon.

Unfortunately, no certificate had been printed. After a minute of searching through the approximate 50 awards and finding none, we agreed to a friendly handshake. A certificate will be quickly produced. Griffin's award was for outstanding service to the battalion.

The spirit in the room of friendly recognition of the cadet's qualifications for one of more awards was one of the many memories I have of this and last year's program. Awards were also presented to teams of cadets for among other things exemplary ability to function in sub-zero temperatures.



I look forward to being a presenter again!

## Funeral of Vietnam Veteran Greg Cigrand

By Randy Lyon



With great surprise and sense of loss I attended the funeral of Greg Cigrand on May 2<sup>nd</sup>. Greg was a neighbor and friend that I had known for years. Gradually weakened by several diseases, I had taken over his mowing for a couple of years—and a beer afterwards when we would solve the world's problems. It was just this year that he and his wife discovered he was at the beginning stages of Alzheimer's. The shock was learning that he was riddled with pancreatic cancer.

Greg was a Vietnam Veteran who never got over the joy of being on an Honor Flight. Immediately after his return, which I witnessed as a Color Guard member at the airport, a big flag appeared in his yard. Larry Hoelscher was my backup if I didn't get back in time from Iowa City. Fortunately, Ruth and I got to Greg's funeral in plenty of time.

*Randy and Ruth Lyon at the funeral of veteran Greg Cigrand*



## SAR JROTC Medal Awarded in Sioux City

By Lance Ehmcke



Our JROTC unit at the Sioux City Schools held its Dining In (awards dinner and party) on May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2024. On behalf of the Iowa SAR, I presented the SAR JROTC medal to Cadet Tyler Cook.

Tyler is a twin (his twin brother Brandon took the photo at left for me). He is bright, engaging, and articulate, and per his student accomplishments summarized when our award was given, an effective student leader. He was the Administrative Assistant in charge of all community service activities (which were considerable) for the entire Corps of Cadets. His identical twin brother, Brandon, was the Wing Commander.

The intermission was short (intended to let the "VIP" presenter guests depart prior to serious partying to follow)

so I did not get much time to talk with Tyler about his plans after graduation in a couple weeks. But from what I heard, both Cook boys either had enlisted or were planning to enlist with the 185<sup>th</sup> Air National Guard here in Sioux City. That will get them serious scholarship money for college. Then, if they take the ROTC route in college, all that will transfer over to the officer program side.

It is a pleasure to interact with such positive and patriotic young people.

## Valley High School JROTC Award

On Wednesday, May 8<sup>th</sup>, Iowa SAR ROTC Chairman Doug Frazer presented an SAR JROTC Award to Cadet Brady Johnson at the first annual Valley High School AFJROTC Award Ceremony. The photograph at right was taken by Iowa SAR member Don Richardson, who attended the ceremony to present JROTC awards to two of the cadets on behalf of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War and its auxiliary.



This was the first awards ceremony for the West Des Moines unit, which had been revived after several years. There were representatives from SAR, DAR, SUVCW, VFW, and several other groups. It was a fine occasion--very meaningful for all involved.

## Veterans' Wives Appreciation Day

By Randy Lyon



Little did Mike and Colette know that they would be the first couple to be honored on May 10<sup>th</sup> by the Veteran's Hospital in Iowa City.

I explained the day and that I was a representative of the group comprised of groups which sponsor activities like this.

My uniform generated a lot of conversation. I learned that her people were here before the colonists. She is a full-blooded Chippewa.

## SAR JROTC medal presentation in Council Bluffs



On Saturday, May 11<sup>th</sup>, Allyn Sheldon attended the Air Force Unit IA-951 Awards Banquet and Military Ball at Thomas Jefferson High School in Council Bluffs, Iowa. During the award ceremony, he presented the SAR JROTC medal to Cadet John (Jack) McNeil.

## Ole Times

By Randy Lyon

Well, if having Yakima, Washington, in common was not enough... it appears that fellow Iowa SAR member Mark Meyocks and I graduated from the same high school in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

This and more fascinating information came to light over lunch at Bandana's in Cedar Rapids. We set this meeting up after an SAR Zoom meeting months ago. The food was good, but the company was a lot better as we swapped stories. Mark's infectious story telling leaves no doubt as to his salesmanship. After seeing his hunting dog injured, he even invented a light-weight chest protector that has gone into production. Two hours flashed by faster than his hand grabbing the bill. I plan on correcting that error on his next visit. I'm sure glad we had this time to get to know each other. Looking forward to the next visit with keen anticipation.



## Headstone Cleaning

By Bob Harris



During the past winter, I discovered that my 4<sup>th</sup> great-uncle, August Gasman (1829-1907), is buried in the cemetery in Mason City, where I live. He was a captain in the 15<sup>th</sup> Wisconsin Infantry in the GAR. Capt. Gasman was born in Norway, lived most of his life in Wisconsin, and then relocated to Mason City late in his life. Buried beside him is another GAR veteran, Pvt. Adam Turnbull, of the 74<sup>th</sup> Illinois Infantry. I spent some time cleaning up both of their headstones with good results. Also, one of the GAR bronze plaques had broken off the stem, so I took that home and repaired it.

At the same cemetery, I cleaned the tombstone of War of 1812 veteran Pvt. Leonard Miller (d. 1886), who served in the New York Militia. Enjoy these post-rain spring days!





## Honor Flights on May 13<sup>th</sup> and May 14<sup>th</sup>

By Randy Lyon



This was an unusual year for the Dubuque Honor Flight. Usually on time like a railroad, the flight on Monday was postponed twice. We arrived at 9:30 p.m. expecting the plane to arrive. Weather in Washington, D.C. had other plans. When no arrival time could be given, we had to leave with several of us having work the next day. Matt Schwalm had a long day of driving.

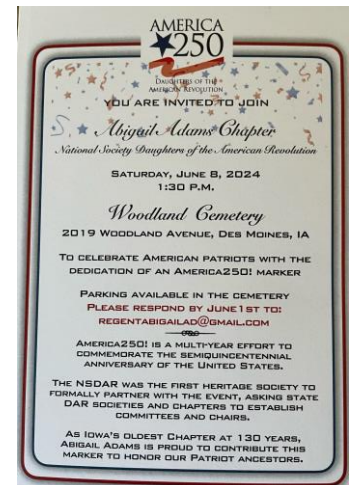
Those of us to arrive on Tuesday (picture at left) were Randy Lyon, Dennis Geesaman, John Pregler, and Larry Hoelscher. We were joined by about 20 Patriot Patrol members.

The veterans each year are near tears. They have had an exhausting day and then all the “welcome homes” prove a bit too much. It was a grand experience.

## America 250! Patriot Marker Dedication on June 8<sup>th</sup> (RSVP by June 1<sup>st</sup>)

SAR members are invited to join the Abigail Adams Chapter of the DAR for an America 250! Patriot Marker dedication on Saturday, June 8<sup>th</sup> at 1:30 p.m. at Woodland Cemetery in Des Moines.

This will be a North Central District level event, involving Color Guard members from Iowa, Minnesota, and Nebraska. If you plan to attend, please RSVP by June 1<sup>st</sup>. For additional details, please contact Chris Moberg or Mike Rowley.



## America's Female "Paul Revere"

By Randy Lyon

Sybil Ludington, a 16-year-old, made her ride on April 26<sup>th</sup>, 1777, during a driving rainstorm. She traveled 40 miles, and unlike Revere, avoided capture.

Sybil learned that the British were planning to attack nearby Danbury, Connecticut--the location of a stockpile of provisions for the Continental Army. Her father, Henry, was a colonel in the militia in command of 400 men.

Just like Paul Revere, who two years earlier had warned the communities outside of Boston of British troops being on the march to seize arms, Ludington prodded her horse with a stick to raise the alarm in Putnam County, New York.

The British were successful in their raid on Danbury. Roused by Ludington's alarm, however, the Patriots encountered the British at nearby Ridgefield, Connecticut, and successfully drove them back to Long Island Sound.

## Harold Kurtt is named to Purple Heart Hall of Honor

By Micah Knebel (reprinted with permission of the Denver Forum)



At 18 years old, Harold Kurtt of Denver enlisted in the United States Army. About six months after enlisting, Kurtt went overseas and later traveled to Normandy, France where he served as part of the 712th Tank Battalion under General George Smith Patton. In April of that next year, Kurtt was wounded in action while fighting in Germany. In October, Corporal Kurtt was honorably discharged from service and received both the Purple Heart and Bronze Star Medals for his service.

Now, nearly 20 years after his passing, record of Kurtt's time in service and his Purple Heart medal are part of a national registry for anyone to learn more about.

The National Purple Heart Hall of Honor is an ongoing project intended to collect the nation's first comprehensive list of Purple Heart recipients.

An electronic database of currently registered Purple Heart recipients, called the Roll of Honor, is available online at <https://www.thepurpleheart.com> and is also available to review at the museum headquarters in New York. The Hall of Honor works to collect, preserve, and share the stories of all Purple Heart Recipients for all branches of services and all conflicts. Enrollment into the registry is done after successful submission of official documents for Purple Heart Medal recipients.

While Harold Kurtt spoke little of his time in service, his character is something that is well remembered by his family and community.

Kurtt had three children: William Kurtt of Waverly, Brenda Gibson of Denver, and Julia Lampman of Dunkerton. William Kurtt described his father as very patriotic. He showed that patriotism through volunteer work in his community. William Kurtt shared that his father was deeply involved in the American Legion as well as the Denver Lions Club, Denver Community Club, and Willow Run Country Club. He was a member of the Denver Volunteer Fire Department for many years and also an active member of the St. Peter Lutheran Church.

He was also very active in his work life. After leaving the Army, Harold Kurtt took over the family shoe business started by his father. That business, Kurtt Shoe Repair, was located in downtown Denver in the alley near where Lovely Pups Grooming is currently located. After taking ownership of the shoe shop, Kurtt also served as one of Denver's rural mail carriers.

"People were his business," said William Kurtt. "It was a good thing to grow up with knowing that just talking to someone and listening is rewarding."

Another characteristic William Kurtt wants others to know about his father is his dad's humbleness.

"Not thinking that he's anything special," said William Kurtt. "That's probably the most powerful thing in the world."

## Outstanding Citizenship Certificate Presentations

By Randy Lyon



I have watched Terry Ruff, an employee of the local Lowe's return department, and Nellie Simons, employee of the printing department at Staples, many times. I have especially been aware of the extra attention they give their customers. Both work in what can be highly charged environments and demonstrate the good citizenship we all hope to see from those hired to help us.





# Flag Certificate Presentations

By Randy Lyon



Brittany Herbert was more than a little amazed by my appearance on her porch. She quickly got over her surprise, however, and asked me to thank the Society for honoring her with a certificate for flying her American flag.



It came as quite a surprise to me when Steven P. and Kimberly Francois pulled in right beside my car before I got out. It surprised them too since they had to stop as I backed out of their neighbor's driveway. Anyway, we had a good laugh before I explained my visit. The two flags make quite a statement on the court. They were very pleased and surprised by the honor.



James D. and Cynthia M. Johnson display a small flag—but it is the spirit that counts!



Brandon Duccini's son was intent on waving me off after answering the door until I explained my mission. The about-face was startling as he was suddenly thanking me and then asking if I would take a picture like this on his camera.



I have only had bad luck trying to catch Marcella Travis at home. I found a safe place to leave her certificate.



Michael Jasper has foiled weekend and evening weekday visits. He now, however, has the recognition of the Society for flying an American 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.*