

UVLC Minutes-----Wednesday, 5 March, 2008

- Call to order
- Invocation—Ralph Donais
- Pledge of Allegiance—led by Richard Jenkins
- Recognition of Visitors, Guests and Commander's VSO's
- Representative Howes –Spoke about a strong family history with the military. Spoke about the book Twin Platoon, which is about 1500 Marines who were inducted into the service in 1967 at old Met Stadium. The Marines were then off to training. Mark Mulvihill who lives in this area was one of the Marines, and is a 2 Purple Heart recipient.
 - He has introduced legislation H. F. 2585 to designate Mar 29 as Viet Nam Day. March 29 was the day the US withdrew from Viet Nam.

1. Reports from: Ralph Donais, Vice Chair—

- Ralph is no longer sending e-mail messages. This will be done by Jerry Kyser.

2. State Agencies

- **MN Dept. of Veterans Affairs**—Commissioner Dyrud announced that Christine Kiel & Linda McDonald attend all legislative meetings dealing with Veterans. **Budget:** The Governors Initiatives have not yet entered the legislative process, due to the budget overview not being out until the end of February. **Bonding:** Legislation moved forward with rapidly. The Senate approved all of the bonding requests for the building and maintenance of Veterans Homes. This included tearing down Building 9 at the Minneapolis Veterans Home and building a 100 bed new building; and a rejuvenation of building 17. The House allocated 20% for asset preservation (\$7 million requested \$2.8 was put in) and a new home in Willmar (\$7.9 million) but nothing (zero dollars) for Minneapolis veteran's home.

Extensive discussion followed: **Motion: Tom Shaw moved the UVLC to support the tear down of Bldg, 9, building the 100 bed new**

building, and rejuvenation of bldg. 17. Motion seconded by Sid Schmuckler Member Vote: Unanimous.

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- Tuesday, March 11, is Veterans Day at the Capital. All attendees are to meet in the Veterans Service building on 5th floor at 11:30. The governor will give an address at 11:45.
- Commissioner Dyrud introduced the new Communications Director, Capt. Anna Lowicki-Long. Resume includes taking the Governors Portrait, Communications Director for the Mall of America, and 133rd ANG Military Affairs Officer.
- Veterans Advisory Council has not been named, but when they are identified they will be working on a Strategic Plan.
- Compliments were made about the Commissioners office getting information out to us.
- Question was asked about the CVSOs and the commissioner's office. Where do they fall into the system at? Who do they work for?
- **MN Military Affairs**—Not in attendance
- **MN Assistance Council for Veterans (MACV)** Kara Cornils, Associate Director—**Minneapolis Stand-down** May 12 & 13. Ceremony will be May 12 at 2 PM. There will be a performance by the 451st Army Band. All Veterans are welcome. Please register via the MACV website: www.vacv.org. Volunteers are needed. **International Falls Stand Down** tentatively scheduled for Aug. 21, more information to come. No court at Stand Down. No plans to add court in the future, but open to discussion. **Duluth Stand Down** is either Aug 20, or Aug. 22. For Stand Down questions contact e-mail: KCornils@macv.org
- **Presentation of Warrior to Citizen Campaign by U of M Humphrey Institute---** Dennis Donovan and Dawn Kelly. Purpose is to make returning soldier feel they are part of the community. The Challenge Coin will be given for recognition of service done by military personnel. Now they are taking oral histories. The recognition is given to businesses;

civilians show are they helping through MN works together. Military personnel can receive a coin by going to a Coin Event, e.g. Memorial Day picnic, Vet's Day, etc. Funds are needed to help pay for the coins. Phone 651-698-1550.

3. Federal Agencies

- **VA Regional Office:** Admiral Cooper, Undersecretary of benefits has Resigned. Space renovation on 2nd floor of the Veterans Building has begun. Hiring has begun again with 15 new people. Anyone can apply for the positions.
- **VISN 23**—Cindy Breyfogle There are 3 more proposals for outpatient clinics. Minneapolis---- N.W. St. Cloud located at Alexandria and Fargo, N.D. **Budget:** 14% increase over last year. Increase in travel benefits. If problems meeting deductible please contact their business office. Education benefit now needs to be 3 years *cumulative* service to qualify. 650 combat veterans enrolled in Feb. for a total of 23,500. A VISN-23 report was handed out. Report showed high satisfaction report.
- **Mpls VA Hospital**—Steve Klienglass, Director. There are Modular buildings on site to handle new Social Service Director, etc. Hayward Clinic was reopened March 4th. Spinal Cord Injury building the painting in the East Bldg has begun. Lots of activity in the Medical Center. Parking continues to be very tight. Poly-Trauma Unit-- working on improvements. Anyone wishing to provide volunteer services should contact the volunteer Services Dept at 612-725-2000. Mike Rosengren, Retired Navy is the new patient related activity person-- 612-467-2380.
- **St. Cloud VA Hospital**---Barry Bahl. Construction almost complete for the new CAT Scan. New Surgical area now has 5 procedure rooms. Added another floor and 3 surgical rooms for day surgery, etc. and a much larger Laboratory. First floor will be an Urgent Care Center. Micki is the new Women Veteran's Coordinator. St. Cloud has tripled the number of female veterans being seen in the past several years. Construction is finishing up a seven bed section in the building for Women Vet's health. The hospital has quadrupled in size the last 10

years. Continue to have staffing concerns. Are in desperate need of Internal Medicine doctors and Psychiatrists. Concerns e-Mail: Barry.Bahl@va.gov.

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- **St. Paul Vets Center**—Andrew Huff. (Resume includes 6 years Infantry in MN National Guard. Infantry in Central America in Interdiction.) There are 7,000 underserved Vets in Hennepin County. The Vets Center wants to open a new center, hopefully in the western part of the County. The St. Paul office is moving to the New Brighton area. The center is doing outreach to many Reserve and Guard. There is a problem trying to reach active duty who were never members of the Guard and Reserve. Suggestion was made that he leave his card with the CVSO's.
- **88th Regional Readiness Command**—SGT MAJ Janet Jones. In October the 88th will become a Region Command and have 19 states under them. Ft. McCoy Bldg will be ready in June. April 23 is the 100th Anniversary of the Army Reserve. No particular event is planned here. Washington D.C. will have a re-enlistment enactment. The 451st band will be the only band to be officially performing at the event. May 16, Ft. Snelling event only for students from area schools. May 17 open to the public and Wall of Heroes. More detailed information at the April UVLC meeting.
- **Ft. Snelling Cemetery**—Art Smith Director. Construction is about 1 year ahead of schedule with no compromise of quality of work. Hosting Cemetery Directors Training in March. Re-aligning all cemetery Head Stones is part of a Federal Initiative. Jim Gemal was promoted to training academy supervisor and will be leaving Ft. Snelling. Memorial Day Theme: "A Grateful Nation Remembers" Keynote address: Patrick Hallinan, Dept. Dir. Of Field Operations. Update of Shrine Status: Of 22 qualifying criteria, the cemetery has met 20. When the Head Stones are finished with being realigned and the roads have been taken care

of, they will meet the 22 qualifying criteria. Electronic Bugle can be used out of Ft. Snelling.

- **Stats for February:** Total interment 334, Caskets 184 and cremations 121. Columbarium 29. Current FYTD total interments 1,829, caskets 919, cremations 747 and columbarium 163. Total to date: 178,395, caskets 145,507, cremations 32,407 and columbarium 479. Female total 1,310. Breakdown for February WWII 107, Korea 33, VN 34, PG 1, peacetime 15 and dependent 144.
- **Ft. Snelling Transportation (Army) and Air Guard Museums**—Tom Bolin. Will be part of the May 16 & 17 event. They have restored tanks and trucks which can be taken out to events. It is a major project to do so, and is in need of volunteers. Also more volunteers are needed to help maintain the equipment.

4. Federal Congressional Representatives and Senators

- **Senator Norm Coleman**—Greg Gorham. Greg will be traveling to St. Cloud, Brainerd and Little Falls in the next week. In Congress the senator is working to eliminate Tricare Fee Increases. Working to reimburse travel for the reserves and guard at the government rate –increase to 48.5 cents with no deductible, also possible monies for lodging. Members express thanks to Sen. Coleman for being non-partisan with Veterans/Military issues.
- **Senator Amy Klobuchar**—Martin Ludden. Has been meeting with CVSO's, Purple Heart, VFW, DAV. Working on Veteran and Senior issues in the stimulus package that is being presented in Congress.
- **8th District Representative**—Collin Peterson-Al Loehr. Not Present
- **1st District Representative**- Tim Waltz—Josh Syrjamski. Not Present
- **2nd District Representative**-- John Kline-Chaz Johnson new in the office. In the House, not much is happening on Veteran Issues. Congressman Kline will be in Prior Lake for Memorial Day events.

- **3rd District Representative**—Jim Ramstad—Margaret Cavanaugh—Not Present
- **4th District Representative**—Betty McCollum—Josh Straka.
Congresswoman McCollum will be going to Afghanistan and Pakistan later this month. Please encourage students to apply for the academies. Can apply up to the age of 23. Only 12 applicants will be interviewed at Mounds View High School on April 8th. New program—Wounded Warrior Program for the purpose of encouraging good jobs for wounded warriors.
- **5th District Representative**—Keith Ellison—Mike Siebenaler. Not Present.
- **6th District Representative** Michele Bachman—Julie Quist. Increased funding for VA Medical Center. Transition Program for active duty to Civilian life. She spent holidays in Iraq and was impressed with the progress and dedication of our women and men serving there. Remember the Veteran’s History project is an on going project. (www.loc.gov/vets) Contact the office if you desire a visit from the Congresswoman.
- **8th District Representative**—James Oberstar—Melissa Jabas. Not Present.
- **Announcements:** Ralph Donais, Vice Chair. Currently law states that to be considered a Veteran one must have been on active duty for 180 consecutive days not for

training. Many Reserve and Guard members, who are retired, do not fit the definition of Veteran. It is Title 38 of the US Code. It needs to be changed.

- **Honoring WW II Women Veterans**—Julie Eszlinger Jensen, spoke about the need to recognize the WW II Women who have gone totally unrecognized. These women never saw themselves as having done anything extraordinary. An event to honor them will be held on May 8, VE Day. It will be held at the 934th Officers Club. The women will be asked to record their histories, and may have help, if needed... Everyone is encouraged to let women and families know and help the women to attend. WW II Women Veterans lunch hosted by The Air Force Ass.

- Meeting in recess for 10 minutes

Business Meeting Convened—Vice President—Ralph Donais

Unfinished Business (aka Old Business)—**1.** 2008 Membership dues roster handed out. Must add Naval Enlisted Reserve Assoc. (NERA) . Suggestion was made to send out Annual Dues Statement to the organizations (Jerry has already stated that he would do that). **2.** Tom Shaw recognized Ralph Donais for doing a good job running the meetings. **3.** By- Laws--- John Baker, Lawyer, Pro-Bono for UVLC. The current bylaws were revised last year with John Bakers help. Recommend a more thorough review and re-write. Voting issues: Bylaws now say one vote/one organization. By- Laws Committee: Jerry Napalinski, Ralph Donais, Sid Schmuckler and Lawrence Dean.

New Business: 1. Motion made to permit Jerry Kyser, President of UVLC to send letters supporting Veteran issues to the appropriate legislators. **Motion seconded** by Lawrence Dean. **Discussion:** Some members do not support all Vet Issues. Two members do not support Viet Nam and Korean War Day to be designated by the legislature. Comment was made about Veterans in the past never having been active and coming to legislative hearings unprepared and just sitting in the audience. As a whole, need to come prepared with written statements to testify at the Legislature. New legislation often comes out before we can meet. Chairman needs to be able to respond and give our support to issues being brought forward. Chairman can contact members for inputs. **Member vote on the motion:** 8 Yes 8 No. Ralph voted to break the tie and the motion passed. **2.** Ted Hoeben spoke about feeling not sufficiently informed when speakers present information at the

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meetings. They leave as soon as they have presented and there is not ample time to question and get a better understanding of what is being talked about. A few others agreed with him. **3. Budget:** A brief discussion was held at this time. No action taken at this time.

4. Tricare Fee Increases: Tom Shaw made motion to send letters to Representatives and Senators in support of HR 579 Military Retirees Health Care Protection Act. Seconded by Lawrence Dean. Vote: Unanimous approval.

5. Tom Shaw introduced Mich Kakos, American Legion Legislative Chair from the 5th District American Legion.

Adjournment

Next meeting: 2 APR 2008. Place to be announced.

Respectfully submitted----Julie Eszlinger Jensen, Secretary –for-the-Day