

Men & Women in the Service

Greenbush in World War I

Greenbush, at the onset of World War I, was a community less than twenty-five years old and in one of the most remote and last-settled pockets of our country. It was, however, very much a part of America, and though many of the residents were immigrants from Norway, Sweden, Poland and Czechoslovakia, they were Americans now. This was their home and they sent **their** sons off to war.

All too soon, residents of the Greenbush area were confronted with articles like this. "Last week word was received that Eddie Pulczynski, who left here last fall, was reported in the list of missing in action in France. No further word has been received at this writing as to his fate. He may turn up again, as so many others have, or he may have been captured or perished. It came as a great surprise as we were not looking for any Roseau County boys in this draft to be in the battle line at this time."

Three weeks later this article was on the front page of the Greenbush Tribune, "We are informed that a letter has been received from Eddie Pulczynski who was reported in the list of missing in action in France. It is well for parents and friends of the boys in France not to worry too much about the lads who may be reported missing or wounded. The government will give definite information just as soon as it is possible to secure same. There have been many rumors about which have been proven groundless. Wait for official information and it will save you a lot of needless worry."



Frank Bialke - WWI Veteran pictured with 1903 Springfield Rifle with Bayonet attached. Taken at Camp Dodge, Iowa. (photo courtesy o/Dutch Bialke)

It is doubtful this advice calmed the anxieties of many families and friends.

In February of 1918, the war was already over for one young man from Greenbush. The Tribune carried this article, "Clarence Graff of Haug, who enlisted last fall and has been stationed in Camp Green in North Carolina returned home Tuesday. Clarence had an attack of tonsillitis and later his lungs were affected to such an extent that it was considered advisable to give him his discharge.

Camp Green is located in a district where it is either deep mud or deep dust most all the time. The camp has been condemned and is to be moved to a more healthful and desirable location.

Clarence says he knows what the soldier's life is and

would go back if given the opportunity. It is hoped that our dry, bracing air will soon put him in his normal health again."

Graff never regained his health completely, and passed away in Montana at the age of thirty-six. He was as much a casualty of World War I as were those who received their wounds on the battlefield.

The Greenbush Tribune, in April of 1918, reported the results of a Liberty loan drive which demonstrated that even those who could not go off to fight the "Hun" fought in other ways. "Monday morning the committee in charge of the Liberty loan drive for Greenbush went out and in about an hour had secured subscriptions considerably over the \$8900 allotted to Greenbush. At this writing the subscriptions amount to \$11,350 and will probably go higher." The paper goes on to list the donors and the totals pledged by each township and each township exceeded its quota. The sacrifices certainly were felt because this was in a time when and an area where people didn't often have cash. On the other hand, patriotism sometimes needed a nudge as is suggested in this retraction in the Greenbush Tribune, "Last week we reported C. O. Haug as not having bought Liberty Bonds. This was a mistake as he had subscribed his quota."

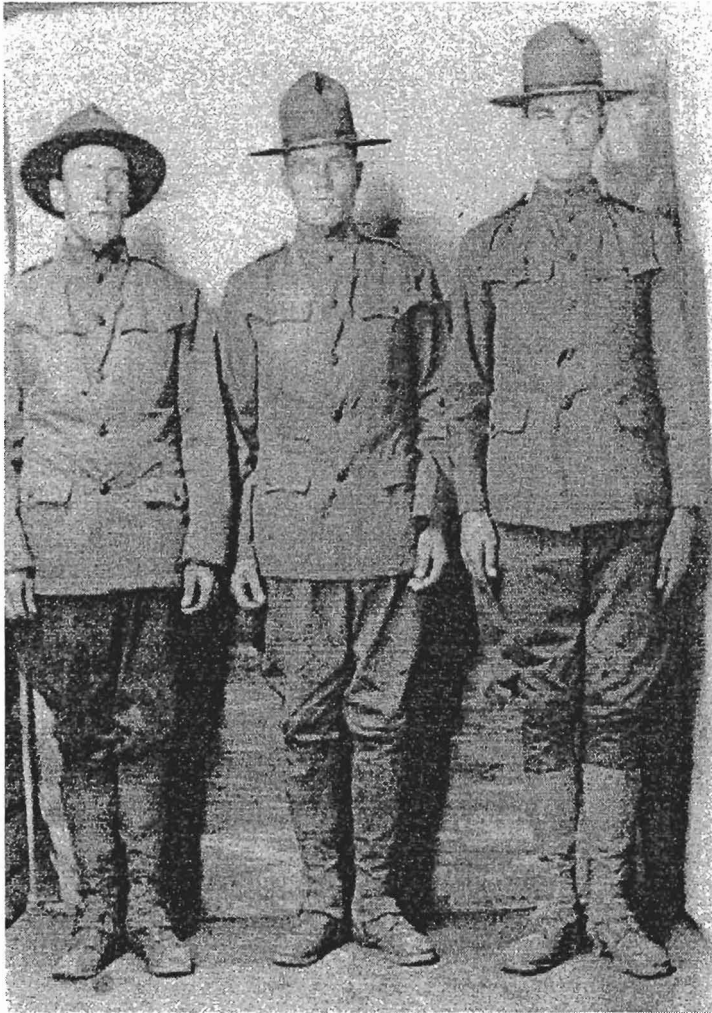
Nearly every community had an active Red Cross organization. The February 22, 1918, edition of the Tribune printed the results of their efforts. Greenbush is listed as having shipped that month, 7 sweaters, 17 pairs of socks, 2 mufflers, 1 pair wristlets, 17 pajama suits, 8 pairs of bed socks and 30 hospital bed shirts. In a letter to his parents in August of 1918, Axel Lofgren, who was serving in France, states, "Got a sweater and 3 pairs of heavy sox from the Red Cross and also wristlets." The local units were doing a fine job in support of our men and country.

The Red Cross units were active in other projects as well. The Tribune, in May of 1918, reported "The Red Cross sale at Badger, Saturday, was a big success. Over \$2,000 was taken in at the sale and lunch."

Belonging to the Red Cross was not only an exercise in sacrifice and hard work but had its social aspects too, as this article reveals. "A Junior Red Cross picnic will be held at Hegstad's store at Haug on Sunday, July 28. A program will be rendered and County Agent Olson will be present to deliver an address. Refreshments will be served. Everybody welcome."

It was suggested that Greenbush could easily form a couple of squads to drill with the Roseau Home Guard company until such time as their own company could be formed. The Greenbush Tribune reported in July of 1918, "Olaf Hildahl has joined the Roseau Home Guard company and now has his uniform. The drill would do all the men good and at the same time would help to increase the civilian army at home. As long as we are at war every able bodied man should receive military training so that he could help out in case he was needed." Ah yes...and a snappy uniform was as good a reason as any to join up.

The draft age during WWI was 21 years and with young men enlisting and being drafted since 1917 an alarming labor shortage was being felt by the summer of 1918. Even the Federal Government recognized the problem and began taking steps to ensure that production at home continued. The Greenbush Tribune, in its "lo-



Three World War I Recruits - Emil Haugtvedt, Anton Foss, Christian Foss. (two brothers and a cousin) (photo courtesy of Donovan Foss)

als" column noted, "Jens Pederson came home from a camp in New York on a three months furlough on Wednesday to assist his folks in harvest and haying."

An interesting excerpt from the Badger paper was reprinted in the Tribune in August of 1918, "Greenbush wants our butcher and wants him badly. We need him and shall profit by the experience of our sister village." Can we assume the butcher from Greenbush was in the army and that perhaps an appeal might be made to the draft board to keep Badger's butcher at home?

In the April 5, 1918, issue of the Tribune this short article told the story. "Every boy between sixteen and twenty-one years of age who is engaged in a non-productive activity, is asked to enlist in the great nonmilitary army to be known as the United States Boy's Working Reserve. The boys so enlisted will work at farming or other necessary industry during the summer vacation. There should be no idlers in the land this sununer."

A popular feature in the paper during the war was, "Letters From The Soldier Boys," with the subtitle, "What the boys are doing in different parts of the world." Consider that most of the young men from Greenbush in 1917-1918 were not as well traveled as their parents were, nearly all of whom were pioneers from other parts of the United States and many of whom were inigrants from Europe. Most of the local boys could never have been more than a few miles from where they were born. WWI granted them adventures undreamed of.

Oscar Kjos writes in September of 1918, "You just ought to see

the mountains and rivers, and today I had my first ride on a big ship. Here sure is all kinds of big ships to be seen and airplanes flying all around. Let me tell you, I have now seen lots of things that I have never seen before."

Not all of the new and different things these young men saw impressed them. In a letter from Gust Williamson are some observations of French farming techniques. "All the grain is cut by hand with some kind of a knife and when they haul hay or anything they use one horse and a two wheeled cart and they walk and lead the horse."

Corporal Al Berg writes of his arrival in France, "Then we started on our box car journey, forty men or eight horses to a car, but they must have had pygmies in mind when they made that designation for we had hardly room to stand in with only thirty-three men. Their trains would make good toys for the children, their box cars not being much larger than a Ford trailer."

Corporal Berg also had a comment about French farm communities, "The people do not live in isolated farm houses but are clustered in communes, a custom of feudal times for protection. The houses are almost as old as the custom too."

Alay K. Czyrson had a few observations concerning the French people. "It sure is amusing to go out in the evening and go into the parks and see the American soldiers and French girls each with a dictionary in hand trying to get along the best they can. Some of the girls are pretty good looking but the average is punk. The American girls skin them all hollow. People in the cities dress pretty well but those in the country, the peasants, dress the same as when the folks left here 47 years ago."

Private L. Brooks had this to say, "The people here in France are very primitive in their ways. Use very little machinery and cut all of their grain by hand. The people all live in stone houses, in fact, draft animals and cattle in the same building."

Some of the soldiers gave brief glimpses of their combat experiences. In this letter Ole Dufwa also announces a promotion. "Got promoted last night to Master Engineer junior grade, and will get \$84 per month. I went up several grades at once." Further in the same letter he states, "I am well as usual, but it has been a close call many times. Shells have fallen thick and fast all around me, but they don't seem to connect with me at all."

Other men had no qualms about giving graphic descriptions of



John Lasniewski - WWI. (photo courtesy of Mary Ann Schires)

the horrors of war as in this letter from Lieut. Einar A. Wahl to his father. "Shell fire such as high explosives and shrapnel is much more terrifying than rifle bullets. A shell can explode a hundred yards away and get you. The horrible wounds from jagged pieces of projectile keeps one in constant dread. War is more horrible than any written description." He goes on to show an evident pride in the fighting qualities of the American soldier. "It is wonderful the way the boys walk right into the rifle and machine gun fire. Nothing stops them. Man after man drops,

but they keep right on going, nothing stops them. It was like that all the time I was there."

Wahl's impression of the Germans was not so favorable. "Kamerade is their wail when cornered and then they throw up their hands only to heave a small hand grenade or fire a very small sized pistol that many of them conceal in the palms of their hands, at their captors. They fire at our Red Cross men who go out into no man's land to help the wounded. Our Red Cross men carry no weapons whatever. We have captured many of theirs with pistols and trench knives in their belts. The Boche is most unsportsman-like." (Boche is a derogatory French term for a German.)

The adventurous spirit of young men during WWI was as alive and well as any other time in our history past and present as this story illustrates. "On Monday Lawrence Lorbiecki and James Dolney left Greenbush with the intention of joining the Polish Army which is forming in this country. These young men enlisted a short time ago during the visit of a Polish recruiting agent. In as much as Lawrence will not be 16 years of age until Tuesday of next week and he went without the sanction of his father, the parents have started action to secure the return of Lawrence. In as much as Mr. Lorbiecki has no help except what Lawrence gave him, he cannot keep the farm going without the boy's assistance."

Less than a month later the rest of the Lorbiecki story is told. "They went from here to Minneapolis from which place they were shunted to Duluth and then to Chicago and finally landed at Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario, Canada, where they were assigned to a company. Lawrence being but 16 years of age was released and James being 18 and likely to be subject to draft in this country was also released and both boys returned home this week. They had a very illinteresting experience, and are wiser boys than when they left."



Adolph Moen

When all was said and done, the young community of Greenbush could be proud of its role in World War One. The people gave and sacrificed and worried about their loved ones in harm's way. Many veterans returned home with wounds from combat and broken health from arduous service. One man, Adolph Moen, gave the supreme sacrifice while in the service of his country and the local Legion Post retains his name to this day. Many of these young men became leaders and mainstays of Greenbush and

their names are still familiar today. Greenbush did not fail its country then nor has it since.

Submitted by Felix Korczak.

WWI- Memories of Vets

Many of these memories of WWI were told to me by the veterans themselves and some by family members. As a young kid in my Dad's grocery store, I had the opportunity to speak to many people and ask questions. War stories were my favorites. I would then write these things down and much to the surprise of my sources

have had occasion to use these stories in speeches and now to share them in this history.

Veterans of the first world war are all gone, but their stories are a connection with that period of our history. Knowing about people who have taken part in some of the most exciting and important events of our past enriches our American Heritage.

WWI Fred and Louie Ruscher

Fred and Louie Ruscher were brothers and both served in the 91st Division of the U.S. Army in France. Louie and Fred were in different companies, and Fred saw more combat than Louie did. Apparently they were together some of the time, because they told of being in a train wreck which resulted in great loss of life of both men and horses.

Fred said that he was on guard duty one night while aboard a troopship heading for Europe. He said when his shift was over the sergeant told him that the ship had passed through a time zone, and it now was the same time as when he had come on duty. According to Fred and backed up by Louie, this went on all night, and when Fred was finally relieved the next morning, it was still the same time as when he went on. He said there was no reason for guard duty in the first place, but the men had to have something to keep them busy. If this story is true the incident must have been quite a joke.

Fred was the more talkative of the two, and one day he described an attack by a German plane on their trenches. In 1918 airplanes were still a novelty to some farm boys, and Fred said that a man named Yates rose from cover and was watching as the plane circled over. "Yates, get down!" Fred yelled.

Then the German dropped a bomb and Yates was killed, Fred said.

The scenario seemed ludicrous to me at the time, because I visualized a fabric-covered biplane with the pilot in an open cockpit and leather helmet, and I didn't see how much of a menace such a thing could be compared with the weapons we had in the 1960s. It seemed funny, but it wasn't to Fred. Now I realize I was just a kid listening to an old man's story while he was recalling the death of a comrade.

Louie said he worked with horses and mules hauling supplies to the front. Fred eventually was wounded in combat but must have had an iron constitution because he lived well into his eighties and Louie died some years later in his nineties.

WWI John Langaas

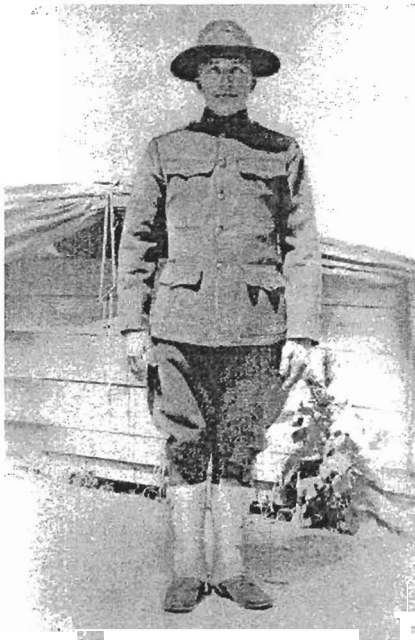
One Greenbush World War I veteran, John Langaas, was a member of the famed Lost Battalion. The Lost Battalion was a unit of the 308th infantry regiment which was surrounded by the Germans when they advanced more rapidly than the units on its flanks. With mounting casualties and dwindling supplies, the 308th held out against superior forces for several days until, at last, reinforcements forced the Germans back. Langaas' daughter, Joyce, said that her father seldom spoke of the war, but she does recall one story in which Langaas said one of his comrades was wounded in the face and could not chew his food. John chewed the food for him until the man was able to swallow it, this being his only means of attaining nourishment. Langaas was employed as a company runner carrying messages from one commander to another. After being surrounded by the Germans for several days, John Langaas emerged

unhurt but with several bullet holes in his uniform.

WWI Ed Pulczynski

Ed Pulczynski took part in the fighting at Chateau Thierry. The only thing he mentioned about it was his feeling of fear while under a machine gun attack. They lay in the grass for quite some time listening to the bullets pass overhead. Pulczynski was drafted along with Gust Williamson and Fred Goslein from Greenbush in the fall of 1917. Early in 1918 The Greenbush Tribune ran an article saying Pulczynski had been listed as missing in action and expressing surprise that men of that draft were already on the front lines. Three weeks later another article appeared with the news that Pulczynski had been wounded and was recovering in a French hospital. Ed Pulczynski died in 1998 at the age of 102, the last veteran of World War I from Greenbush.

WWI Frank Novacek



Frank Novacek

Frank Novacek was a combat veteran of the trenches in 1918. He told of living in knee-deep water and wringing out his socks and drying them under his arm pits. He recalled an incident where a man in his outfit was wounded by his own hand grenade. Netting had been set up three yards in front of the trenches for added protection, but sometimes things didn't work out that way. When his comrade threw the grenade, it did not clear the netting but bounced back and exploded blowing off the man's face yet he lived.

Frank survived the travails of war and returned home on the same ship that carried General "Black Jack" Pershing. He then marched in a great victory parade in Washington D.C. in 1919. "Marching with General John J. Pershing through the victory march is my proudest moment," he said.

Submitted by Felix Korczak.

Greenbush in WWII

The bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, changed the lives and attitudes of all Americans. The little village of Greenbush, nestled in a remote corner of northern Minnesota, was no exception.

Pvt. Joe Dziekonski had come home from the army that fall because Uncle Sam had decreed that 26 was the age limit for the draft and he had the option of remaining in the service or resuming his life as a farmer. His option was gone early in 1942, and he resumed his life as an infantryman and returned to the 6th Infantry Division.

Melvin Nesteby and David Lofgren were serving their country in the Philippine Islands and in four short months, after heavy fight-

ing, would find their lives a living hell as prisoners of the Japanese.

Even before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, people in Greenbush knew that life would become tougher as this article from the local paper indicates: "All of Greenbush and the surrounding country will be busy collecting scrap aluminum next Friday, July 25th (1941). It is part of a nationwide drive that is taking place now in order to help relieve the serious shortage in this vital metal which has developed in the manufacture of airplanes and other defense machines." Dr. Stone was chairman of the local committee and announced that the Girl Scouts and Junior Auxiliary would handle the collection in the village of Greenbush. "The aluminum scrap is to be brought to the Greenbush creamery where Charles Lindell will weigh it and put it in its proper pile."

Prior to the breakout of war, John Grabinski, the local shoe repair man put this article in the local paper: "Mr. Grabinski states that shoes use most of the world's leather production, and that in 1940 Americans made and used up more than 450 million pairs of shoes. People should be urged, says Mr. Grabinski, to use their old shoes longer. Many people throwaway shoes when half their useful life is gone. If such shoes were kept in use through proper repairing, Uncle Sam could get the leather he urgently needs."

Some may have seen this article simply as an advertisement, but an interview with Raymond Schaller, who was a teenager during WWII, verified that John Grabinski's remarks were true. "If something died on the farm, you skinned it no matter how much it smelled. I remember skinning a cow that died in a pasture, and it was some very unpleasant work. But you only got fifty cents for a day's work and you got eight dollars for a hide so it was an easy decision to make."

Shortages and rationing were to be frustrating facts of life for the next four years. Within two months of the outset of war, the War Production Board banned the production of private automobiles, and by May of 1942, gas rationing was instituted. A system of gas usage priorities was developed. Windshield stickers and ration books were issued, pleasure driving was forbidden, and a national speed limit of 35 m.p.h. was set. An "A" sticker was issued to owners whose cars were nonessential, allowing 3 to 4 gallons a week. A "B" sticker was for driving deemed essential to the war effort, and could possibly buy 8 gallons per week, and a "C" sticker was for physicians, ministers, mail carriers, and railroad workers. The "T" sticker was for truckers with no limit, and farmers, apparently, could



Veronica Stanislawski 1945

get all of the fuel they required for agricultural use. Farm fuel was dyed to show that it was for agricultural use only.

Another alarming shortage soon manifested itself and grew more intense as the war went on, it was a shortage of young men and the labor they performed at home. Unemployment virtually disappeared, and the folks back home often found themselves with more work than they could handle.

Every month long lists of men leaving for service were published until one had to wonder if anyone would remain home for long. Service and sacrifice

was not only the domain of young men, women served as well. Included in veterans lists and honor rolls were the names of Adaline Hutchinson, Veronica Stanislawski, Ada Lien, and Margaret Svir.

Not everyone could fight the enemy with a rifle and not every one could wear the uniform, but nearly everyone fought in one way or another and sometimes that fight took unusual forms with the common denominator being dedication to our country.

Suddenly, even cattails had a military value. Since kapok, a material used in the making of life jackets, had been imported from Japan and was no longer available a substitute had to be found. The lowly cattail filled the bill. Cattail fluff, "typha," was a hollow thread with enough buoyancy so that twenty ounces would keep a man afloat for 48 hours. Cattail fluff was also used in the manufacture of sleeping bags for the military. An excerpt from the Greenbush Tribune stated, "Many of our country folks are making real good money gathering cattails and Joe Evans is kept busy buying up the stuff. Some of our marshland may yet become valuable owing to the demand for cattail." Robert Nelson remembers seeing piles of cattails at the railroad depot awaiting shipment. He said, "There were two ways of doing it. You could just gather and sell the cattails as they were or strip the fluff out of the heads and bag it. You would get more money for stripped cattails."

The following appeal to American housewives appeared in the Tribune during the war: "It has become desperately necessary for every housewife to save and turn in to her meat dealer every possible ounce of used cooking grease. Why? Because fats contain glycerin and glycerin is a vital ingredient of smokeless powder. The housewife, the meat dealer, and the man behind the gun are a team. It is the patriotic duty of every housewife and every meat dealer to "pass the ammunition" in the form of waste kitchen fats, to make glycerin, to make gunpowder."

Gene Stauffenecker remembers that Greenbush people brought in cooking oil to the meat market and that his father stored it. Periodically, it was picked up by a service which delivered the oil for processing for the war effort. He recalled that many customers for whom they butchered, would donate some of the fat or lard to the government.

Residents' names were frequently printed in the paper for various war projects. Perhaps this method was used to instill a spirit of competition or perhaps to shame some people into participating in the war effort. On April 29, 1943, in the Greenbush Tribune, this article and a long list of names appeared: "We are publishing the hours put in by the ladies working at surgical dressings. Check the list, and if your name does not appear, make an effort to be on next time. Also have you put in as much time as possible? This work is urgent. DO YOUR PART." Among the leaders in surgical dressing hours at that time were: Mrs. Avon Harper 96 1/2, Mrs. Henry Paulson (Clara) 68 1/4, Mrs. Charles Lund (Nina) 48 1/2, Mrs. Ole Pederson 43 1/4, Mrs. Ing Folland (Adele) 37, Benna Hasson 35 1/2, Mrs. William Paulson (Clara) 34 1/2. When publishing the results of war fund drives, the name of the person and the amount contributed was there in black and white. Some of the less wealthy residents may have suffered some embarrassment. However, the point at the time must have been that every American participate in the cause no matter how large or small the contribution.

Raymond Schaller stated that when people in uniform came home on leave they were treated like kings. "The soldiers probably never ate so well as they did when they came home, because they were always invited somewhere for a meal. They were treated like honored guests everywhere." People were interested in what the mili-

tary services were like and were proud of their soldiers.

News about people overseas was sometimes slow in coming, and families must have suffered a great deal of anxiety when no mail had been received for a long time. In January, 1943, word came that David Lofgren was a prisoner of war. The Tribune published this article: "David Lofgren Is a Prisoner of the Japs. O. K. Christianson received a telegram conveying the good news that his grandson David Lofgren was alive in the Philippines, a prisoner of the Japs. The telegram did not give any particulars but it was good news just to know that he was alive and apparently as well as a prisoner could be expected to be."



Douglas (Dukes) Hogan radio operator (WWII)
calling ships in to beach - South Pacific.

Not until April, 1943, was word received of Melvin Nesteby. This according to the Tribune: "Mr. and Mrs. Roy Nesteby received the news on April 29th from the War Dept. stating that PFC Melvin Nesteby is being held prisoner of war in the Philippine Islands by the Jap government. Melvin was wounded in action on April 5, 1942, at Manila and has been unheard of since."

Meanwhile the home-front faced more shortages, rationing, more hard work, and more disappointments. A headline in the April 12, 1942, Greenbush Tribune proclaimed "No steel for Auditorium." The school had burned down in 1939, and construction on the new facility had been on going ever since. This news indicated that the chances were slim for completion of the auditorium before the end of the war. The article concluded: "It seems that only after we lick Hitler and the Japs can we have our enlarged school facilities, so we will have to pitch in to the full of our ability to clean up Hitler and the Japs so we can get our needed school facilities. So let the Japs have both barrels."

Another war-time article proclaimed, "Serious tire and gas shortage." It went on to state, "A B-29 bomber uses in one hour as much as an "A" ration holder, under present allowance in 5 1/2 years." In the same issue we read, "Road building hits low point." Construction has been greatly curtailed by federal restrictions and by shortages of men, material, and equipment.

In August of 1943 a headline read, "Shockers wanted."

Harvesting still involved cutting and bundling grain. The bundled grain had to be "shocked," or propped tent-like, with the grain heads up for drying before threshing. It was hard, time-consuming work.

The article went on: "A. L. Teske is alone on his farm and needs help to shock. August Kukowski Jr. is alone but has a large amount



Frank Emery was in the army from 1941-1945 serving in the Pacific Theatre 111th Regiment. He drove 2 1/2 ton truck for personnel and supplies and was also a rifleman. (photo courtesy of Leona Emery)

of grain to shock up. Ole Hostvedt called for help as did Art Stenberg. Several more have asked for help and no doubt there will be many more. There are few men left in town, and those who are left have a man-size job to keep their own essential work up. Last harvest we managed to get up some crews who went out in the evenings to shock. Also some of the women helped out. We need volunteers for this season also."

Many people must have felt over-

whelmed by these seemingly endless problems and demands.

In a June, 1942, edition of the Greenbush Tribune, an article appeared concerning Pvt. Lawrence G. Dahl. "He was reported to have died on April 19. Where he was or how death occurred is unknown by the family. So far as we know Lawrence is the first man from our community to die in action. The family has the sympathy of the community in their loss of a son and a brother."

Recently, Hazel Aasen, sister of Lawrence Dahl, said the family never learned the details of Dahl's death. "We received a telegram from the Navy Department saying he was killed in action aboard a ship off Midway Island on April 19, 1942, and was buried at sea. That was all." Dahl had enlisted in the Marine Corps in January of that year.

The community knew these young men and women were not off on a lark and soon learned that the war was going to make a lot of demands on everyone before it was over. And so it did. The paper announced, "Coming Scrap Iron Drive, plans being perfected for drive between seeding and harvesting." Life was going to remain very busy. The paper went on to inform the community that wherever possible, two townships had been grouped under one head, attempting to eliminate the confusion that was experienced the previous year. The following men were picked to head their respective townships:

Rev. M. Wisniewski for Polonia and Barto, with Steve Stanislawski as chairman for Barto and A. L. Dolney for Polonia. Art Anderson for Dewey and Hereim, with Art Stenberg for Dewey and Joseph Anderson for Hereim. Leonard Brekke, unorganized and Soler, with Art Kjersten for Soler and Hans Melby for unorganized and Blooming Valley. Gust Waage for Barnett. Tom Metvedt and Frank Bialke to represent the Legion.

"A semi-surprise black-out in seventh service command area next week," was announced in a 1943 issue of the local paper. Many people must have considered this a useless exercise being so far removed from the battle fronts and metropolitan areas and perhaps had not been complying, because the article went on to explain: "It is absolutely compulsory to observe the rules during a black-out, and if you do not, you are liable to answer to Uncle Sam. Wars are



Felix Stanislawski July 17, 1944.

not won by easing up, and this war is not over until the unconditional surrender of each Axis member is obtained. Read the instructions elsewhere and act accordingly." Ha! So there!

Reminders that a war with bullets and shells was going on were regularly found in the local paper.

"Mr. and Mrs. Harold Lerum received a telegram from the War Department that their son, James, had been seriously wounded and that particulars would follow."

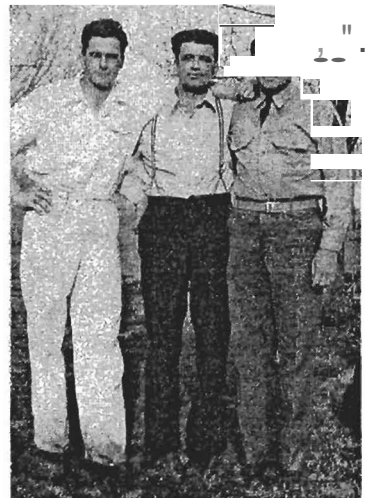
Helen Dziekonski was notified that her son, PFC Joe Dziekonski "was making normal improvement from a gunshot wound in the left thigh."

"Capt. Walter Olson, Greenbush, Minn. was credited with downing a Jap fighter in the South Pacific after Liberator bombers served as decoys to lure Jap pilots aloft."

"Sgt. Theodore A. Vacura has been awarded the Silver Star for gallantry in action on 25 March, 1945 in Germany. With regard to his citation he says, 'That's what a guy gets for sticking his neck out.' It is still a mystery how he became a sergeant. He was just a private when he was missing in action in Germany. When next heard from he was promoted without a word of explanation about it."

"Mrs. Albin D. Pulczynski had a V-mail letter from her husband on May 26, stating that he was out of prison and was in France on his way to the states." Pulczynski was wounded and taken prisoner by the Germans during the Battle of the Bulge.

Greenbush people were doing their part to win the war whether on the battlefield or at home. This article appeared in the local paper during a 1943 War Bond Drive: "Greenbush is Over the Top. Our quota already more than doubly bought, and more to come. We believe Greenbush was the first village in the county to go over the top in the War Bond Drive, as over \$7,000 worth of bonds were sold before 11:00 of the opening day."



Severyn Bialke, WWII Vet, pictured with brothers Peter and Ray when home on leave. Circa 1944. (photo courtesy of Dutch Bialke)

Red Cross drives for funds and the amounts donated were published in the paper, hours of volunteer time and the activities were listed. People toiled longer hours than ever without the help of their sons. Children at home grew up faster than usual, because they were needed to pitch in and lend a hand. Some veterans had returned home because of wounds received in action, and people heard from them how horrific war is. They knew their young people were sacrificing and suffering, but they also knew great progress was being made

and we were winning the war. Amazingly, only one person from Greenbush had lost his life, Lawrence Dahl, in 1942. Now, the year was 1945 and the war, certainly, could not go on much longer, maybe Greenbush would be spared from the KIA column in the casualty lists.

It was not to be. Greenbush was fated to pay yet a higher price for this long-sought-after victory. Early in 1945, word was received that PFC Edwin Haagenson had been killed in action on December 7, 1944, on Leyte Island in the Philippines. In a letter to the family from his commanding officer, Lt. Ergley states, "Edwin was with his platoon in the successful defense of our position and gave his life in order that the enemy be driven out and destroyed. He was one of the best-loved members of this organization and has left a gap which cannot be filled."

"S-Sgt. Arthur Kolberg was killed in action on January 20, 1945 on Luzon in the Philippines. The Purple Heart has been awarded posthumously to Arthur who sacrificed his life in the defense of his country." The article in the Tribune reporting a memorial service ends this way: "Thus is another young life sacrificed on the altar of his country. We trust that this time it will not have been in vain."

After being wounded in December of 1944, Theodore Eeg recovered, only to be wounded again in February of 1945. This is an excerpt from a letter received by his mother. "Your son, Theodore T. Eeg was seriously wounded and died in this hospital in Belgium 5, February, 1945. I personally saw him and know that he was given the best of treatment. He was wounded in Germany by a shell fragment in the left chest and died soon after arriving at the hospital. He was treated so that he didn't suffer much."

Victor Mellas was also killed in action on February 5, 1945, on a battlefield in northwestern France. His mother, Victoria Kukowski, received this letter from Victor's chaplain, "Victor was killed instantly on a battlefield when a fragment of an enemy shell struck him in the head. Victor paid a great price that we as a free people might continue to enjoy all those things that make life worth living."

Also in February, 1945, this notice appeared in the Tribune: "A telegram was received from the War Department saying that Cpl. Adolph Zimek had been killed in action somewhere in Luxembourg. The death of Adolph has grimly emphasized that while the war news continues good it is being achieved only by the sacrifice of young men like Adolph."

Lind township is on the western edge of Roseau County and shares the border with Kittson County. On April 20, 1945, this article appeared in the "Karlstad Advocate."

"Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Martin have been notified by the War Department that their son, Melvin, who died in Germany on March 15th, 1945, was the victim of an accident, when the bicycle he was riding collided with an armored car. No other details were given. Melvin had written his folks at various times that he was a guard at a German prisoner camp and it is thought that he was on duty at the time of the accident.

Melvin Martin was born Mar.



Adolph Zirnek - WWII

18, 1918, at Greenbush and lacked but four days of being 27 years of age at his death. He had lived with his parents in Lind township. He was inducted into the service Nov. 2, 1942, took training at Ft. Benning Ga. And went overseas at the invasion of France."

After months of hard fighting and years of Japanese brutality, Dave Lofgren and Melvin Nестеby returned home to enjoy the bounties of a free country, knowing that they earned every one of them. People from Greenbush took part in some of the most significant events in American history, events which changed and shaped the world. Men returned with chests-full of medals and covered with glory. They returned with scarred bodies and scars that didn't show. Some suffered broken health for the rest of their lives. Some did not return at all, proving there are things more important than life itself.

Our returning men and women were welcomed home in 1945 as heroes and were received with honor and respect. They saved the world from an unspeakable dark age that certainly would have stifled humankind. Everyone served our country in one way or another and few rested on the laurels of victory. Instead, they turned their energies to building America into the greatest nation in the world. They are commonly known as "The Greatest Generation" and rightly so.

Submitted by Felix Korczak.

WWII- Veterans' Experiences

WWII Erling Nестеby

Erling Nестеby was an army sergeant in command of two tank destroyers in Europe. He explained that the difference between a tank and a tank destroyer was the destroyers' sacrifice of armor for speed. He said that a tank weighed forty tons to the tank destroyers' eighteen tons and, except for this difference, they were the same in fire power and looked the same. The tank destroyer could not take the punishment from enemy fire that a tank could absorb. Nестеby said that when a tank destroyer fired, it moved immediately because by shooting, it had given away its position. The Germans fired flak back at the Americans, and Nестеby was always amazed at how accurately they could set their fuses to explode. He did give the enemy a grudging respect for being good soldiers.

Nестеby told of an incident where they were advancing on some farm buildings. He was in the turret and opened up on the buildings with the 50 caliber machine gun. Four Germans came out and made a run for it.

"I cut them all down, and then we decided to drive up there," Nестеby said. "Three were dead and an officer's leg was shot off at the thigh. We pulled up and stopped next to where the officer lay. I was chewing snoose, and as we stopped, I spit over the side. I looked down at the German, and he just glowered back at me knowing it was I who had shot him." Thus a member of the "master race" met a farm boy from Greenbush, Minnesota.

On another occasion, Nестеby questioned a farmer in Belgium concerning the whereabouts of the Germans. He said that the farmer appeared **very** nervous and, during the conversation, kept glancing over at a near-by chicken coop.

"I took my rifle," Nестеby said, "and opened the door to the chicken coop and there stood a German officer pointing his pistol at me. I pointed my rifle at him, and he decided to surrender."

Nестеby kept the pistol, a P-38 automatic, for many years along with papers verifying its status as a war souvenir. Years after his death the pistol remains in his family.

WWII Hector Reese

Hector Reese joined the navy during WWII before he graduated from high school. After his training was complete, he was assigned to an attack transport named the Bollinger. He said that his orders originally were for another ship and that for reasons he cannot now recall, he "missed the boat." About two months later, he heard that the original ship had been sunk. During the war, Reese crossed the Pacific Ocean seven times and his was one of the first ships to land troops at Kobe, Japan, after the surrender.



Hector Reese - WWII Veteran circa 1945.
(photo courtesy of Wendy Wehner)

One operation Reese remembers vividly was the battle of Iwo Jima. His ship was anchored off Mount Suribachi during the fighting and provided an excellent view of the action. The off duty sailors watched the battle through binoculars, and he described it as watching a silent movie. They were completely out of earshot but could see the action quite clearly. He saw men fall off the rocks after they were hit, saw artillery rounds hit, and saw the smoke and fire but didn't hear anything.

He remembers seeing a marine with a flame thrower jump off a rock and when he landed he was in front of a cave with the flame thrower ready to fire. He remarked at how plainly he saw the marine fire his weapon into the cave and see the thing torch out and the cave turn black. This was at the bottom of Mount Suribachi.

Reese's job aboard ship was operating the crane which lowered and retrieved the landing craft. The boats were made of wood and were anchored several yards away from the ship, in the event that the ship would have to weigh anchor for a rapid withdrawal. They were essentially out of range of the enemy. He said it was rather startling to see spent Japanese bullets sticking in the boats like arrows when they brought them back on board.

Reese remarked at how much he admired and respected the Marines. He said that when they picked up the troops after the fighting, they were dirty and exhausted, and would lay on the deck as though they were dead.

"In contrast," he said, "we ate three hot meals a day, had showers, and a clean place to sleep."

While at Iwo Jima, Reese had the opportunity to go ashore to visit Clayton Kjos who was serving in the Sea Bees. Some years later Reese and Kjos became brothers-in-law.

From Iwo Jima, Reese stated that his ship returned to the United States and picked up a load of troops for the invasion of Okinawa. Every trip, it seemed it took twenty-nine days.

After the Okinawa invasion, Reese's ship picked up troops for the occupation of Japan. When the troops were unloaded in Kobe, Japan, Reese had the opportunity for shore leave. He decided to visit Nagasaki via a narrow gauge railroad and view the destruction of the city caused by the second atomic bomb. Nagasaki was a city primarily in a valley and the destruction was not as great as the first bomb drop at Hiroshima. Reese stated that everything was melted

and turned to glass except anything made of marble. Anything made of marble survived the tremendous heat of the blast.

Reese spoke to a Japanese survivor of that fateful day who happened to be beyond the vicinity of the valley. The English-speaking Japanese told him that he believed that day was the end of the world. He said that for three hours you could see nothing but dust and debris in the air.

Hector Reese returned home in 1946 and received his discharge from the U.S. Navy. He returned to High School and graduated in 1947.

WWII Albin Pulczynski

Albin Pulczynski took part in the Battle of the Bulge. He was a member of a machine gun crew which was pinned down by the Germans one afternoon. The Germans kept attacking the rest of the day and kept them there all night. By morning they were nearly out of ammunition, Pulczynski had been wounded in the leg by shrapnel, and they could see no way to escape. There was no choice but to surrender. When I asked him if they had killed many Germans, his only reply was, "That place was a mess."

Pulczynski was a prisoner-of-war for four months. The Americans were advancing very rapidly at that time of the war and prisoners were being moved frequently. On one occasion they were loaded on trucks and rumor was that they were being taken to Leipzig. Pulczynski, who spoke Polish asked one of the German guards, who also spoke Polish how long it would be before they arrived in Leipzig. The German answered, "The Americans are in Leipzig." The prisoners knew then that the war wasn't going to last much longer.

WWII Axel Lieberg

Axel Lieberg served aboard an attack transport and his job description was shipfitter. I never did get the details as to what his work involved except that he worked with sheet metal. Lieberg took part in seven operations during the war including Kiska, Tarawa, Luzon, Kwajalein, Saipan, Guam, and Leyte. In the space of time taking in the Kwajalein, Guam, Saipan operations, Lieberg spent more than a year aboard ship, never once setting foot on dry land. During the entire war Lieberg said the only battle damage his ship received was at Leyte in the Philippines. The ship anchored



Axel Lieberg - WWII
(photo courtesy of Elaine Lieberg)

next to his was hit by a bomb and some shrapnel glanced over to their ship.

Lieberg crossed the equator several times during the war and apparently loved being in on the initiations of the "Pollywogs." He said that a person didn't have to go through the proceedings if he didn't want to, but then he would never become a "Shellback," would remain a "Pollywog" and not be on the "dishing out" side of the ceremonies no matter how many times he crossed the equator.

Lieberg said that a few days

before the crossing the crew would start getting some eggs ready by placing them near steam pipes to "ripen." For the initiation they rigged up a canvas tank which was used to contain a mixture of the rotten eggs, oil, grease, and seawater. The "Pollywogs" were immersed in this concoction and then hosed down with seawater after they emerged.

Some people were made to scoop water up from one side of the ship in buckets and then run over to the other side and empty it overboard. This was known as "leveling the sea."

An officer on Lieberg's ship was fond of the phrase, "I say again." He would repeat all of his announcements with this, and eventually it became irritating to many of the crew. A part of his initiation was to go around the ship repeating, "I say again," throughout the ceremony. Lieberg never did say whether his phobia was cured or not.

WWII Joe Dziekonski

Joe Dziekonski was a member of the 63rd regimental combat team of the 6th Infantry Division. He saw action in New Guinea and the Philippine Islands. He described seeing "Washing Machine Charlie" on New Guinea. The Japanese plane would come over every night



PFC Dziekonski adjusting a 60mm mortar on maneuvers in the California desert 1942. (photo courtesy of **Korczak** Photo Collection)

and the engine sounded like it was not hitting on all of its cylinders; it ran noisy and rough. The plane would fly over, drop a bomb, and leave. He said the bombings never seemed to do any damage but the purpose of the flights was to keep the men awake and on edge.

When they were aboard the transports going from New Guinea to the Philippines, Dziekonski described an attack by Japanese planes. He said that the ship ahead of his in line was attacked but the Japanese pilot missed his target. He then proceeded

to swing his plane around in an arc and made a suicide dive into the ship. Black smoke and fire billowed out of it but the ship was not lost.

On one occasion Dziekonski's outfit took part in an action to destroy or trap a number of Japanese tanks. The tanks had been spotted from the air and apparently had only one route of escape. The job of the infantry was to cut the road and call in artillery fire on the Japanese positions. It was a very long march and Dziekonski remarked about how no one fell out. He said that in training men were always falling out with some ailment or another and that the ambulances would pick them up and haul them in. This situation provided more incentive, for there were no ambulances. They did cut the road and settled down to wait for the Japanese to emerge from their positions. When they eventually did come out, the artillery fire was called for. **Forty-seven** tanks were destroyed and two managed to escape. Dziekonski was surprised that there were few Japanese dead and that most of them managed to get out and melt

away into the jungle. He also made a rather dry observation, "Our tanks didn't bum like the Jap tanks did."

Dziekonski recalled that it didn't take long to learn what was required to stay alive in combat conditions. The first thing they did in the morning was to spray the trees with machine gun fire. The Japanese would sneak in at night, climb the trees, and snipe at the men at daylight. He said it wasn't long before all of the leaves and branches had disappeared and there was little trouble with Japanese snipers.

In the fighting on Luzon nocturnal Banzai attacks were common. Dziekonski remarked on how often he was short of hand grenades. When one threw grenades he did not give away his position to the enemy. Some mornings the Americans would emerge from their foxholes to see the results of the previous night's action and often the results were gruesome spectacles of smashed Japanese bodies everywhere.

Joe Dziekonski was wounded on Luzon but recovered and came home. Another Greenbush man, Emil Syverson, was in the same company with Dziekonski.

WWII Robert Harders

Robert Harders was in the Second Marine Division and took part in the battles of Guadalcanal, Tarawa, and Saipan. In the division history of the Second Marines is a photograph of a dead Japanese soldier and a dead U.S. Marine. In the background of the picture, a group of Marines is taking a break during the fighting on Tarawa. Harders is in that picture and remembers the incident. The Japanese soldier came out of a bunker and bayoneted the Marine in the fierce fighting the night before the photo was taken and was killed, in tum, only moments later.

Harders noted that the photograph appeared in the December 13th, 1943, edition of Life magazine, a copy of which he has in his possession today.

Among some of the most vivid of Harders' memories is of the fear and exhaustion. In combat they were incredibly tired all of the time, and the tension was almost overwhelming. One night while under attack, Harders noticed a Japanese officer's sword lying just inches away from his face. He could have easily taken it for a souvenir, but he looked at it all night long and could not bring himself to touch it.

By the time the Saipan operation came around, Harders was a squad leader in charge of twelve men. Within a few days of heavy fighting, only four men were left alive. On one occasion when advancing against the Japanese, Harders received a blister across his wrist and shortly afterwards another blister across the bridge of his nose. These were caused by bullets which barely missed him. That same day Harders killed a Japanese officer. "I could tell the difference," Harders said. "The officers wore uniforms of a slightly lighter color than their troops."

The fighting on Saipan ended Harders' combat career when he was seriously wounded by a shell fragment on the thirteenth day of the battle. The last man of his twelve-man squad was also wounded shortly after, on the same day.

After taking part in three gruesome combat operations, being severely wounded and spending weeks in hospitals, and upon returning to the United States, Harders was not old enough to vote or even to buy a legal glass of beer.

Submitted by Felix Korczak.

Melvin Nesteby- A True American Hero

"Let no force ever take Old Glory down again with rifles and bayonets."



Mel and Catherine Nesteby in WWII jeep waiting for parade to begin. Taken 7-4-04 in Washington State. (photo courtesy of Walter Nesteby who is standing next to the jeep)

Melvin Nesteby, a true American hero, was born the fifth of ten children on a farm near Greenbush, Minnesota, on July 16, 1920. His mother and father, Minnie and Robert Nesteby, sturdy, spiritual Lutheran pioneers, were first generation Norwegians who settled in the Greenbush area around 1914. Melvin had eight siblings: Roy, Clifford, Volburg, Emmett, Alice, Irene, Delores, and Ruby. Because of the need for the children's assistance with hard physical work on the farm and the need for Melvin to work on neighboring farms to support himself and assist in the support of the family, schooling frequently took second place. He did, however, learn a love for all outdoor things.

With only a third grade education, Nesteby enlisted in the U.S. Army on May 17, 1941, at Fargo, ND, after his brother was drafted. Clifford, Melvin, Emmett, and Irene all served in the military during World War II. Melvin Nesteby chose a warm part of the world, the Philippine Islands. Having driven a Caterpillar tractor in his farm work, he thought he would be qualified for operating a tank. At the time of his swearing-in, Nesteby and some of the other recruits were presented with a pocket-sized New Testament at a church service. This little book sustained Nesteby through all the trials of the coming years, as well as being a comfort for many other young men in their last hours after fierce fighting and brutal incarceration in the Philippines during World War II. This sacred keepsake was confiscated by the Japanese at the time of surrender but, miraculously, was returned to Nesteby much later. The stamp of the Japanese Imperial Army censor, with date line inserted, appears on the second page of the book. Interestingly, the censors had crossed out some phrases in the little Bible.

Arriving in Manila in July of 1941, Nesteby was assigned to the 31st Infantry Regiment, First Battalion, Company A, First Platoon, First Squad. After a 30-day acclimation period, he was assigned to basic infantry training in hand-to-hand fighting, forced marching, weapons, first aid, and survival. The regiment **was** considered one of the best battle-ready units on active duty, with some of the best modern equipment and weapons, but they were trained mostly as support troops, not combat. Nesteby had not yet completed his basic training when the war started. Just hours after the attack on Pearl Harbor (Hawaii, United States) the Japanese attacked the

Bataan Peninsula and Corregidor. Approximately 90 percent of the men in Nesteby's regiment did not survive the ensuing war. Nesteby was a rifleman in front line troops.

Roused at approximately 3 a.m. on December 7th, Nesteby and the troops were told, "This is war." The troops were issued ammunition and other war supplies and grabbed breakfast in the mess hall before being marched out the gates and ordered to dig foxholes. From one of the foxholes, about two or three miles from Nichols Field, Nesteby watched the enemy bombers ride in on the sun, which blinded the anti-aircraft gunners. He watched the enemy destroy our aircraft and inflict severe damage on Nichols Field. He could see trucks full of wounded and dying men. Our planes were inferior and outnumbered. "A hopeless feeling swept across everyone. It was hopeless before we started," he said.

But the men kept on fighting. Nesteby's company held their position through days of bombing and strafing. On Christmas Eve, Nesteby's unit was shipped out, bombs exploding around the ship, to Corregidor where the next day bombs fell again. Then the company was again called to rendezvous and was moved on to Bataan by boat, and then marched up toward the Linguan Gulf area where the Japanese were landing their main strike forces. Although desperately outnumbered, American and Filipino troops fought valiantly with inferior combat training and with defective ammunition that had been stored since World War I. Soldiers bravely approached closely enough to toss grenades into groups of Japanese, only to find the grenades were duds. The Japanese grenades, however, did work. Nesteby recalls one coming in his direction and bumping off his helmet to land just a short distance away. Rising up on his elbows, he hit the grenade away with the palm of his hand. "It was all a matter of reflex," he says.

Supplies and reinforcements that the soldiers were expecting and kept hoping for were sent instead to Australia. Conditions were horrid. People were wounded and dying for lack of reinforcements and lack of ammunition. The carnage on Bataan was a planned sacrifice to buy the time needed to save Australia from conquest. Nesteby says it was probably a good thing that the men on Bataan didn't know the hopelessness of the situation at the time. "We never retreated, but we did move backwards," he says. "We were soldiers fighting for friends, loved ones, and the constitution of the United States."

When the American surrender actually came, when the American flag was taken down and replaced by the "Rising Sun," Nesteby was in the tent hospital with a wounded foot sustained in a Japanese artillery attack. One of the Japanese officers entered the hospital, laughed out loud, swung his sword, and hit Nesteby's gangrenous foot, causing him to lose consciousness. When he came to, a doctor was operating on his foot with no anesthetic.

Soon the imprisoned hospital patients were rounded up for what is now known as the Bataan Death March, actually one of many. Everyone was forced to march, no matter how grievous the wounds. Somewhere along the trail, permission was granted to return the wounded to the hospital. "We were lucky," says Nesteby. After this one act of mercy, the Japanese killed every soldier who couldn't make the march, crushing skulls and bayoneting hearts. Actually this "act of mercy" was a ploy. The Japanese placed heavy artillery right next to the hospital tents, and as long as there were wounded Americans in the hospital tents, Americans at Corregidor refrained from returning their fire.

Nesteby was only 22 years old when he was wounded and captured in April of 1942. He was held for three and one half years in

the following camps: Hospital #1, Billibid, Cabanatuan, and Hirohata, Japan.

Nestebey spent six months of his incarceration at Billibid Prison-- a rotting dungeon where prisoners were starved, mistreated, beaten, and beheaded. By now, everyone realized America was not coming to the rescue, and losing hope, many gave up and died. Few survived this prison. Despair, **dysentery**, malaria, worms, and wounds plagued the inmates-- as did hunger. Nestebey says they talked of little but food-- and that many of the survivors later wrote cookbooks and became gourmet cooks.

Then one day Nestebey and others were herded to a railroad station and transferred to another prison camp, Cabanatuan. With outside temperatures of 100 degrees, they were transported in metal boxcars with no food, water, or toilet accommodations. More prisoners died. At Cabanatuan, brutality, illness, and starvation continued to take a toll on health and lives.

Nestebey's spiritual strength is a repeated theme in his life. His "Little Book," the New Testament Bible he received near the time of his induction into the service was confiscated by the Japanese at the surrender. About 18 months later, while he was on his plank bed recovering from a malaria attack, someone asked if he was Mel Nestebey. The voice said, "I have something for you." Something was laid in his hand-- it was his long-lost Bible. Later a fellow prisoner told Nestebey that it had somehow ended up in Zero Ward, where prisoners were sent to die. There the dying passed the Bible among themselves-- their only hope and strength. Hundreds had held that Bible in their final moments. And now it was returned to Nestebey in time to be carried with him to Hirohata Prison Camp in Osaka, Japan-- the return of the book was a miracle in itself.

One day, a large detail of American prisoners, including Nestebey, was taken in a "Hell Ship" to Japan, to the Hirohata Prison Camp in Osaka. During the nine-day transport, three levels below deck, the Americans were fed only slimy boiled barley. Most of the men became sick, and 179 died. Upon arrival at Hirohata **Prison** Camp in Japan, life did not improve. The men became **slave** labor in a steel mill and were fed only rice. In the rice were small worms that hardly looked different from the rice kernels. Nestebey says trading for these worms was competitive, as the worms were a source of much-needed protein-- two kernels of rice for a worm. The men were allowed no contact with the outside, no war news. "We were dead men. We knew we were going to die. They did everything but actually kill us. Survive! That was my only thought. I hated them as much as they hated me. I thought, 'Hey, you couldn't kill me on Bataan by ambush, bayonets, or bombs, and you're not going to kill me now.' And I had a solid belief in the The Guy Up Above." Nestebey was liberated in October of 1945.

The end of the war came shortly after the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, about thirty miles from the Hirohata Prison Camp. The former prisoners were taken from the camp to Yokohama. Getting off the train, they were "welcomed" by a circle of American soldiers wielding bayonets with only one gap in the circle that led to a large concrete building. It seems the officials were afraid the men would kill Japanese out of rage.

After the liberation, Nestebey continued on active duty including one year in the Korean War and three years occupation in Germany. It took him five years to regain his health after the war; and one of the reasons he became a military career-man was simply that, with the health debilitatiOlihe'd sustained, he did not feel he could leave the security of military health benefits.

The Veteran's Administration has Nestebey on their roles perma-

nently as a one hundred percent service-connected disabled veteran. Among his health problems, the two of greatest concern are his heart, which was weakened by beri-beri, and peripheral neuropathy in arms and legs. Both conditions were brought on by lack of protein and vitamins during his three and one half years as a prisoner of the Japanese.



Mel Nestebey in uniform - taken inside the Veterans' Memorial Museum in Washington State.

Melvin Nestebey, truly a hero, earned the following military awards: Purple Hearts (4 awards), Presidential Unit Citation (3 awards), US Presidential Citation, Bronze Battle Stars (11 awards), Korean Presidential Citation, Bronze Stars (2 awards), Combat Infantry Badge, Philippine Presidential Citation, American Ex-POW Medal, other medal and ribbons (15 awards).

In the book "*History of the Defenders of the Philippines, Guam, and Wake Island*," is a photograph of Nestebey, his military history, photographs of the events, and photographs of the friends he left behind.

Although Nestebey's early schooling "took second place" to farm labor, he now has seven and one half years of college credits, earned in the army, at Parson's Business College, and the Illinois State University.

Nestebey, now retired, leads a quiet life. His desire now? "Just simple peace, peace above all," he says, but he is anxious that the sacrifice of his comrades who fought against such unbelievable odds in Bataan be remembered. To this end, he has backed the Veteran's Memorial Museum in Centralia and the new Veteran's Memorial Museum in Chehalis (both in Washington State), to which he bequeathed his little Bible, the Bible that "belongs" to hundreds and hundreds of victims of the Bataan debacle. He wants the museum set up so "that the younger kids will realize the debt that was paid by veterans."

Melvin Nestebey, a hero with Greenbush roots, says that although he paid a heavy price for his service to his country, he has no regrets. His activities may be severely limited due to war injuries, but he greets each new day with joy-- happy that he is a free man.

"Let no force ever take Old Glory down again with rifles and bayonets."

Submitted by Eunice Korczak. Organized and condensed from materials submitted by the Nestebey family. Sources: Mirror Magazine (DecemJer, 1994); The Chronicle (Feb. 16, 2004). Reprint of an article from The Smithsonian magazine; Information from <http://www.axpow.org/nestebymelvin.htm>: Melvin Nestebey's personal writings and materials.

Veterans Farm Training Class

The Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, more popularly known as the GI Bill of Rights, was enacted by Congress and signed by President Roosevelt to provide greater opportunities for the returning WWII veterans.

To assist in the soldier's re-adjustment to civilian life, this bill provided federal funds for their medical needs, low interest loans to purchase a home or start a business and especially aid in the area of education. It was one of the largest government participation projects in the area of education.

The American Legion Organization has been given credit for adjusting the main facts of this bill. Lobbying efforts by the members aided in the development of this law. The ultimate success of this bill is due to the American servicemen and women, including the Veterans who were involved in the bill's planning stages and those who utilized the benefits the bill provided.

This Montgomery Bill literally changed the face of higher education in America. Within seven years of the inception of this bill, eight million veterans had taken advantage of the benefits it offered. Funds were provided to veterans, to obtain a degree or continue their education, which was curtailed by the war. These students were also eligible to receive money needed for living expenses during the time of their education.

To accommodate this huge influx of new students, study courses had to be added and more instructors hired. The overcrowded conditions of campuses and classes facilitated the building of new and larger universities.

A large majority of these returning soldiers had or were starting families that required adequate housing. These vets made use of the housing benefits of this Bill to buy or build their homes. The urban areas of America were developed and the suburbs were born! The GI Bill of Rights and the WWII veterans were the building blocks of the 20th century United States of America.

The huge amount of money provided by the United States government for this bill has been repaid many times by Americans. Increased incomes as a result of higher education and the number of new jobs created increased the amount of income taxes and the new businesses and development of the suburbs increased the property taxes collected by the government.

The local American Legion was preparing to help area WWII vets take advantage of the benefits of the Montgomery Bill. At the July 1946 meeting of Legion Post 88, Henry Hess information on the GI Farm Training Bill. There apparently was quite a lot of interest in this benefit, as the Greenbush Public School Board became involved in the process of organizing agriculture classes. But the local community would endure many obstacles in utilizing the educational portion of the GI Bill.

Post Commander Sanders informed the legion members at the December 1946 meeting, the school board was still investigating their options for beginning Veteran Training Classes. Post 88 legion members were dedicated to the cause and attended the January 1947 school board meeting. At this meeting the legion members were notified the school board was still actively searching for an instructor to the Farm Training Program.

A Legion Farm Training committee was formed. This committee attended school board meetings throughout 1947. The committee members reported the school was "still looking for an instructor which has been the only handicap in starting the GI Farm Training Program."

The wheels of progress moved very slowly. The Legion members were losing patience and at the December 1947 Legion meeting Commander Haug appointed Nelson to "pick a man to contact the Veterans Administration to see what could be done about the farm training program."

All good things are worth waiting for!

Patience and the passing of time have its rewards. Greenbush, Minnesota's Veterans Farm Training classes started to materialize.

Mr. Ed Sisler was discharged from the Army in 1948. He was attending college when he was drafted. Upon his discharge he resumed his education as an Agriculture instructor with the aid of the Montgomery Bill.

Mr. Sisler had graduated with an agriculture degree and was hired for his first job as the instructor of his fellow veteran students.

In May of 1950 Mr. Sisler attended a legion meeting, informing the members of the necessary requirements to attend the Veterans Farm Training Class, which would be starting locally in the fall.

Advertising of these classes was posted at the school and local communications broadened this information. The area high schools posted sign-up sheets and accepted applications from the men who were interested in the Ag classes.

An advisory committee, consisting of several county citizens determined who would attend this "agriculture school" and notified the men if they were accepted. Most applicants were accepted. Some of the first students attending were living outside Roseau County. These applicants were accepted to fill the student numbers necessary to establish this class.

Veterans applying to attend these classes had to be actively engaged in farming or were planning to make their living from farming and own four dairy cows or the equivalent. Some of the applicants were involved in hog, sheep or turkey production. A certain number of each different animal was required.

The Ag students were not required to own their farmland. Mrs. Bolsum was a prominent landholder in the area, renting out most of the acres she had inherited from her father to local citizens. Several of the local Ag students rented farmland from Mrs. Balsam.

The Agricultural Farm Training was a night class that was held twice a month. The training length established by the Montgomery Bill was based on the Veteran's length of time he served as a member of Armed Forces. Most of the local students were entitled to four years of available classes.

Mr. Sisler's wages were paid by the Greenbush school board, which was reimbursed by the Federal Government. The students involved in these classes a check every month. Class participation and recording of farm operations qualified for school credits, which were vital to the Federal checks, the farming vets, received.

The Ag classes varied in instruction. The primary intention of each class was to provide an education on the latest developments in the area of agriculture. The lessons involved the basic economics of profitable farming in any farming operation.

The class curriculum consisted of fertilizer updates, artificial insemination for dairy and beef farmers, animal husbandry and basic electric, welding and wood construction.

Veterans attended class sessions that were applicable to their farming operation. Students attended the Crookston Winter Show and were involved in the Greenbush Sheep Days. Ag credits were earned by the veteran's participation in these public events. Many hours of planning and preparation were involved in their livestock showing at these events.

The Agriculture Training Program invited as many visiting lecturers as possible. Anyone with current knowledge offarming was invited to speak to the class. Participation credits were earned by attending these lectures.

The Ag class participated in many 'field trips.' Mr. Sisler and his students visited each class member's farming operation. The students viewed their fellow classmate's farming methods. The visiting students might have learned different techniques of successful fanning or may have offered suggestions on improvements to the host fanner's operation.

The Fann Training Program provided textbook infonnation, but most of the fanning vet's education came from 'on the job training.' Involvement in the local shows and visiting the area fanns provided the most important lessons learned. A greater education was acquired studying from the experiences of other local fanners.

Did the Farm Training Bill have an effect on the Greenbush community?

Mr. Sisler was employed as a substitute Ag teacher and when a pennant position opened at the local school, he applied and was hired as the Ag instructor. The Montgomery Bill provided the basis of the career for a veteran. Many Greenbush high school students were involved in his Ag classes in the 1950s and early 1960s.

Many of these WWII veteran agriculture students still reside in the area. The fann businesses they built are currently familiar fanning names in our community. These farms have had to expand or diversify, changing their farming operations based on the needs of the world.

These area fanns are now operated by the second or third generation offamily fanners, with all the education and experience passed down through the generations.

Is it possible the Montgomery Bill is still receiving the benefits of its tremendous initial expense?

Submitted by Linda Blumer.

Memorial Day 1945

The members of Adolf Moen Post No. 88 met at the Legion Hall at 9 am and proceeded to the Greenbush School Grounds where a parade was formed consisting of members of the Legion, Legion Auxiliary, and members of the school faculty and scholars.

The parade was headed by the colors. A very unique group carried the colors and served as color guards. Comrade Joe Rinowski, veteran of WWI carried the U.S. Flag guarded by his son, Donald, now a member of the U.S. Navy.

The post flag was carried by S. A. Mattson, veteran of WWI guarded by his son, Donald, now a member of the U.S. Navy.

The parade went from the school to the post office corner where a drill was put on by a group of school girls led by Miss Simpson.

Joe Witzman, corporal in the U.S. Army, marched with the Legion.

At the village hall Commander Hess had charge of a very interesting program. Roll call of our departed comrades who have died from this community was read and responded to by members of the Legion Post. The following names being read...

- Pvt. Lawrence G. Dahl
- Sgt. Arthur I. Kolberg
- PFC Edwin J. Haagenson
- Sgt. Adolf Zimek
- Victor Mellas

- Theodore Eeg
- Melvin Martin

A memorial flag was presented to Tom Zimek in memory of Adolph Zimek who was killed in Germany.

A flag was given by a group of girls of the fifth and sixth grades. A talk was given by Rev. Berg. Song by the boy scouts, remarks by Commander Hess. Flowers and pins were given to the Gold Star Mothers by the Auxiliary.

After the program at the hall, the Legion led a parade to the cemetery west of town where graves of veterans were decorated and a salute to the dead was fired and taps blown by Commander Hess.

The following members of the Legion were present...Hess, Stone, Kotschevar, Mattson, Rinowski, Lasnieski, Langaas, Hellund, Evans, Duray, Kjos, Walsh, Anderson, Simmons, Williamson, Metfedt, Madison, Wallin, Paulson, and Novacek.

Donald Rinowski, Donald Mattson, and Joe Witzman, members of the armed forces in WWII were also present.

Madison, Adjt.

*Submitted by Felix Korczak. *This was copied verbatim from the minutes of Post 88. It's an example of the Memorial Day service from years back.*

Veteran Graduates of 2000



Veteran Graduates of 2000. Back L to R: Floyd Carlson, Bob Wollin, Arne Tuura, James Hasson, Arthur Slawson, Clarence Shires, Kendall Peterson, Sanford Olson, Eldor Lorensen, Berdeen Knutson. Middle L to R: Orner Olson, Fauncie Erickson, Gerald Brinkman, Edwin Stromlund, Harry Hudson, Alvin Halvorson, Jeffrey Everson, Conrad Olson. Front L to R: John Black, Elwood Beito, Melvin Mattson, Walter Alten, Frank Emery, Roy Anderson, Harry Beito. Missing from photo: Linn Rigstad. (photo courtesy of Jan Wollin)

On November 10, 2000, twenty-six World War II veterans received their high school diplomas from the Greenbush-Middle River High School. Seven family members also received diplomas for veterans who had passed away. These diplomas were presented to World War II veterans who left school to fight for freedom and never had the opportunity to finish their high school education. The Minnesota Department of Education and the Greenbush/Middle River School were proud to present these diplomas for a "job well done."

Diplomas were presented in memoriam to: Palmer Beito, Walter Beito, Melvin H. Ellefson, Irwin Halvorson, Clement Kalinoski, Axel Lieberg, and Harry Stoffel.

Submitted by Jan Wollin.

Memories of the Korean War
Merton Kirkeide

Merton Kirkeide was drafted in June of 1951 and sent to Fort Knox, Kentucky, for his basic training. His advanced training was as a forward observer for the artillery. He was sent to Japan after Thanksgiving of that year and was given opportunity to attend more schools, Kirkeide chose a course in mechanics. When his orders assigning him to Korea came down, they were for a mechanic in the Fifth Regimental Combat Team assigned to an area known as the "Punchbowl." This was an area in Korea which saw a lot of combat during the war.

Although Kirkeide's job was not in a front-line capacity, some of his experiences proved to be uncomfortable. When he arrived at his base in January of 1952, no bunkers had been constructed. The quarters for the men were tents, housing from ten to twelve men each. Kirkeide remembered snow was on the ground, and it was cold. On the day of his arrival, an enemy plane strafed the tents and dropped a bomb. After the bombing, the men saw the value in digging foxholes and thus became a little more professional as soldiers. The hole in the ground from the enemy's bombing became the site of the first bunker to be constructed.

One of Kirkeide's tasks was to retrieve broken-down supply trucks on the narrow mountain roads to the front lines. The roads had to be kept open, and obstacles to traffic had to be removed. They found that the most common breakdown was broken distributors and whenever they forayed into this "no man's land" they always had a good supply of distributors. He stated that, on occasion, they could hear American artillery shells go over their heads on the way pounding the enemy lines. Camouflage netting, a vital piece of equipment, was taken on every trip to cover the vehicles while working on them. The Chinese had artillery, too.

When asked for his opinion of the Korean people, Kirkeide replied that they were a very tough people. They accustomed to vehicles and walked wherever they had to go. He saw women babies on their hips and five gallon pails on their heads walk for miles without complaint.

Kirkeide was close enough to the front lines to observe wounded being evacuated on helicopters. He said, "If I had to be strapped along side a helicopter on a stretcher and flown out, I would have been scared to death."

Eventually, Kirkeide was rotated out when his outfit's tour of duty was over. The Fifth Regimental Combat Team was replaced by the Fortieth National Guard Regiment. He remembered the loud speakers of the Chinese blaring out a farewell to the Fifth Regimental Combat Team and a welcome to the Fortieth National Guard Regiment. He thought it rather spooky that the enemy was that well informed.

Kirkeide admitted that the best part of his service to his country was coming home, because he knew he was arriving in the best country in the world.

Manvil Dvergsten

Manvil Dvergsten was an artilleryman during the Korean War. He tells a story which illustrates the unending heartbreak of war. During a period of heavy fighting, a friend of his told him, "I shouldn't even be here. I was to be rotated out, but someone at headquarters made a mistake on my paper work." The man never returned home, because he was killed in action long after he should

have left the country. Such is the importance of paper work.

On another occasion (Dvergsten believes it was during the fighting for a mountain known as "Old Baldy") he observed a convoy of trucks hauling troops to the front lines. The convoy came under enemy artillery fire and several vehicles were hit; men were killed by the truckloads. Dvergsten remarked, "They never even saw the enemy. Think of the time it took to train them, the expense, what a waste."

He thought it was during this period of the war that twin brothers from Greenbush, Peter and Paul Montry, were wounded. "They wouldn't be separated and were probably wounded by the same shell," he speculated. Dvergsten also went on to say he knew that Merton Kirkeide was in Korea at the time, and Duane Penas and Chester Stengrim were out there somewhere, too. I have noticed in various interviews, that the men were aware of fellow area citizens being in the same country at the same time. Now and then, on rare occasions, brief reunions occurred, mostly accidental meetings.

Submitted by Felix Korczak.

Vietnam

Vietnam was a very unpopular war, but every veteran who went and returned has his or her own personal story. Those who did not return paid the ultimate sacrifice. We as Americans owe them an apology for making light of this sacrifice! Who would have thought a war of such unpopularity would, forty years later, become a big political issue for the presidency?

The Vietnam War vets were not welcomed home after the war, but the war was exploited by movie companies and by politicians for their own use or gain. Here is part of the real story.

In 1967, a Non-Commissioned Officer School was started. Troops were taught by the same instructors who taught Officer Candidate School. They made army history by becoming E-5 and E-6 sergeants in nineteen weeks! They were sent to Vietnam as squad leaders. Of the approximately five hundred who finished the first class, only two-thirds returned to America. One-third of the class gave the ultimate sacrifice for our freedom!

Part of the job of the new Non-Commissioned Officers who went to Vietnam as young squad leaders was to take out four-man patrols for three days and two nights in enemy territory. (Lew was one of these young non-commissioned officers.) If you think you knew fear before, try hiding from the enemy, with nowhere to hide, for three days and two nights!

Here are some real Vietnam veteran personal stories:

- A young man from Gennany named Peter joined the U.S. Army to become an American citizen. Two weeks before he was to come home he lost an arm and a leg- his sacrifice for your freedom!
- A young man from California named Duane goes to Vietnam as a medic and has to handle many wounded and dead troops. He sees entirely too much blood. He goes home to "a very unwelcoming community" and has a nervous breakdown- his sacrifice for your freedom!
- An eleven-year-old girl from Wisconsin named Julie wrote penpal letters for a school project to us GIs in Vietnam giving us moral support. Years later her brother died from Vietnam-related circumstances- her sacrifice for your freedom!
- A young lad from Minnesota, who was attached to the Army Corp of Engineers, was killed while running a caterpillar- his sacrifice for your freedom!

These are only a few of our Vietnam veterans' personal stories

that people seldom hear. There are many more out there. You need to stop and listen.

Remember, in the war against terrorism, the Vietnam War and other wars, the vets were protecting your freedom!

Submitted by Lew Huartson.

**Lew was a sergeant shipped out after only nineteen weeks of training in the NCO School. He served as leader of four-man patrols and was with Peter during the ambush that took his arm and leg. Lew is acquainted with the other persons mentioned in this article.*

Vietnam Experience

In June of 1965, the Second Brigade of the First Division boarded a troop ship in San Francisco, California, and headed for Vietnam. I was on board that ship and vividly recall the first day out. The water was quite rough, and I believe over half the troops on the ship



E. Kenneth Johnson in Vietnam - Troop showers and tents in background. (photo courtesy of Ken Johnson)

were seasick; There was the stench of vomiting throughout the ship. I made my way to the deck of the ship to breathe some fresh air. If I hadn't, I'm sure I would have been sick, too.

After about thirty days on the water, we finally arrived at Cam Ranh Bay on the central coast of South Vietnam, where we set up pup tents for our first night in Vietnam. I remember the many flares set off, continuing all night, so we could see beyond the barbed wire surrounding the compound.

I pulled guard duty in a bamboo thicket, since we didn't have time to dig foxholes. A shot rang out

from behind me, and a bullet cut off a bamboo shoot in front of my nose. I turned around quickly, falling on my stomach. I was ready to return fire, when I suddenly realized that if I shot in that direction, I'd be shooting into the officers' tents. I decided to just lay there and pray a lot of prayers.

In Vietnam there are two seasons, hot and dry and hot and wet. We got there in the raining season, so it was hot and wet.

A few days after arriving in Cam Ranh Bay, we moved to our permanent location, which was a few miles from Bien Hoa, a town twenty miles north of Saigon (Ho Chi Min City). My job in the army was as chaplain's assistant, and in that capacity, I would get the area ready for church service, pass out hymn books, and so forth. I was also the chaplain's chauffeur, set up his tent whenever we moved, and accompanied him when he visited the three companies attached to Headquarters Company of the Second Brigade.

When I first set up the chaplain's tent in Headquarters Company, the Vietnamese interpreters' tent was set up very close to it. So after we had everything set up, I thought it might be nice to pay the interpreters a visit. They received me very warmly, and we became great friends.

Besides the five interpreters that I got to know, I also became acquainted with two Vietnamese policemen who became very good friends. Later it became quite an honor for me to be the only enlisted man to be invited to their Vietnamese New Year party (tet, they called it), and it turned out to be quite a celebration. There was a very large menu of Vietnamese food to eat and a lot of beer to drink.

The Second Brigade's main job in Vietnam was to secure areas for new troops coming in from the States. We were the first of a huge build-up of soldiers throughout South Vietnam. (In my opinion, this was one of the biggest errors our country has ever made, because it caused us to make a bigger commitment than we could ever live up to.) Before this time, we were there strictly as advisors, but now we had entered a war that I never believed was winnable. As I stated before, our main job was to secure safe areas for new troops coming from the United States, so we did a lot of traveling to new locations. Many of the places that we secured were not accessible by ground vehicles since there were no roads there, so we were flown in by helicopter.

I remember places like Plieku, in central Vietnam, that was within twenty miles of Cambodia. This was a mountainous area and actually got a little chilly at night. Then we were flown south of Saigon to an area known as the Iron Triangle. We also went to an area known as the Michelin Plantation, where there were many rubber trees. We secured areas all around Bien Hoa, because after a few months, the whole Division moved into those areas.



The Shnook - these helicopters were used for troop carriers in Vietnam. (photo courtesy of Ken Johnson)

When we secured these areas, we had very little conflict with the Viet Cong, but almost all the troops for whom we secured it experienced a great deal of conflict. I could never figure out why they seldom attacked us, when intelligence told us there were thousands of Viet Cong in the places we went. Then someone explained that the Viet Cong were afraid of us because we were part of the First Division and we had a big red "one" at the top of our shirtsleeves. Number one was best, as far as they were concerned, and number ten was no good. So if they noticed a number like 173rd Airborne or 101st Airborne, the Viet Cong no doubt thought they'd be pretty poor soldiers and would be much easier to defeat in battle than someone with a number one.

Now that's not to say we had no conflicts with the enemy, because we had plenty. I remember when the Second Brigade Headquarters set up their company on the outskirts of Bien Hoa right over a Viet Cong tunnel complex. They sneaked out of their tunnels in the middle of the night and killed and wounded many soldiers, until a caterpillar was brought in to destroy all the tunnels.

I also recall a squad of troops going on patrol in the jungle outside the camp and all were killed except one. Another time when

we were patrolling an area that we were securing, we were walking alongside the tanks and one of the tanks ahead of me hit a land mine. The shrapnel from the explosion hit one of my good friends in the head. He was killed instantly.

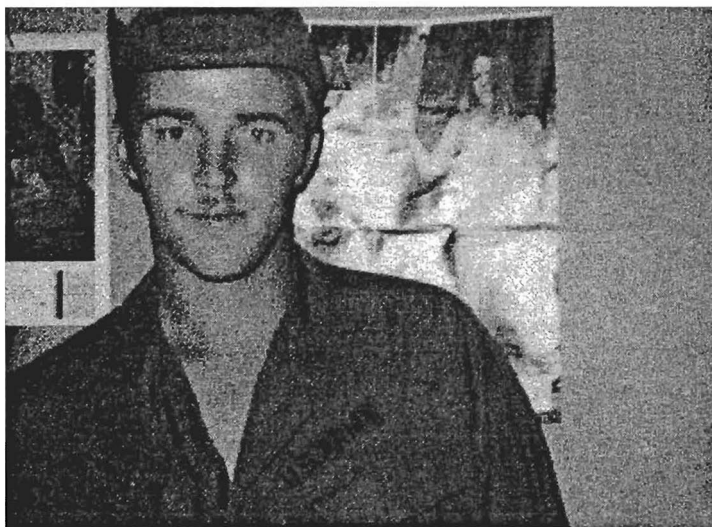
I left on II March 1966 from Tun Sonute Airport in Saigon and arrived the morning of March IIth at the San Francisco airport. March 11th is my birthday, and it certainly was the happiest birthday and longest birthday of my life. We had crossed the dateline on that trip, so I wound up with about forty-eight hours of birthday!

I didn't see any drug use at all by American troops in Vietnam. I also didn't see atrocities committed by American troops against the Vietnamese people. But I understand there were quite a bit of both years later over there.

I was treated very well by the American people when I returned from Vietnam. That was another thing that changed as the war continued.

Submitted by E. Kenneth Johnson.

Memories of Vietnam Stanley Melby

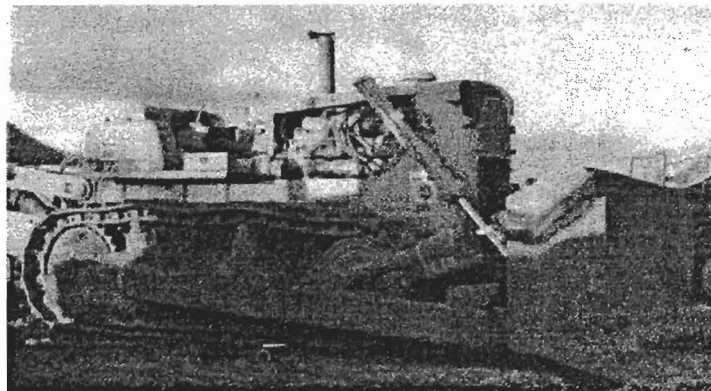


Stan Melby Vietnam - 1971

Stanley Melby was in an engineer unit in Vietnam and was a heavy-equipment operator. His unit worked, primarily, on building roads. Melby said they tarred everything to prevent the enemy from planting mines. The Vietnamese tried to mine the tarred roads too, but then it was easy to spot where the mines had been laid. The road shoulders were a different story; the enemy mined them regularly, and great care had to be taken when driving off the tar.

When they started work in the morning, everything had to be carefully checked out because the enemy would sneak in at night and lay mines ahead of the tarring crew. The road crews were attacked in the daytime on a couple of occasions in his experience. Air strikes were called for and the helicopter gun-ships arrived in a matter of minutes and strafed the area until everything was secure.

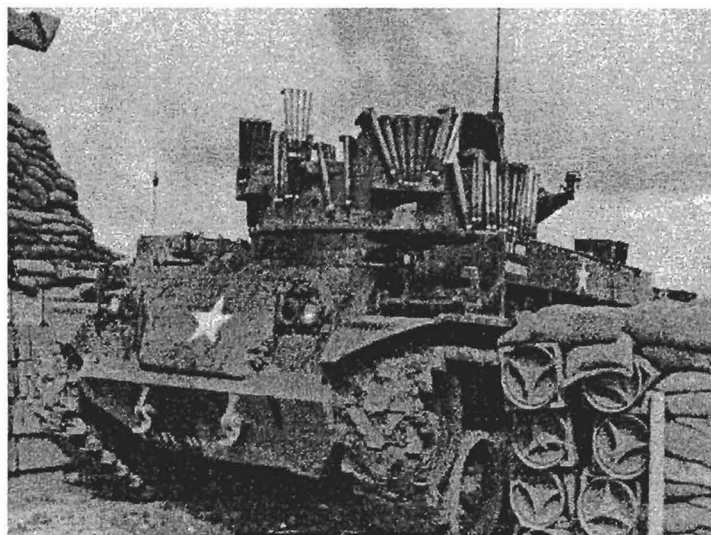
Melby operated a bulldozer most of the time, but when they didn't have anything to do, they would sit in the "gun-trucks" and shoot. They fired at nothing much of the time but the idea was to let the enemy know how much firepower they had. The gun-trucks had a tremendous amount of firepower. They had twin fifties, grenade launchers, and a couple of M-60 machine guns, and the men were encouraged to bum lead. The ammunition was endless, "We got all the ammo we wanted," Melby said. And so, they would shoot. They fired into the hills and the woods, seldom at anything in par-



Vietnam 1971

ticular, but it was something to do to pass the time.

One day a Viet Cong soldier attacked the truck. He was dressed in the typical black pajamas and came at them all by himself yelling and screaming. They opened on the man with the twin fifties and made short work of him. No one understood why he did it, because he didn't have a chance from the beginning. Possibly, the man finally had enough of war and committed suicide.



Vietnam 1971

The men enjoyed watching the helicopters when they were firing on the enemy. They worked an area by slowly circling and firing down with their machine guns. The tracers made a solid red line down to the ground. When one chopper ran out of ammo, another one filled in immediately and took over. In this fashion, the area was strafed until the enemy was destroyed or retreated. Sometimes two helicopters would work together at the same time if the area was quite large. The ammunition expended must have been tremendous.

Fuel trucks had a set-up for unhooking their tanks by pulling a lever while still in motion when under fire. Then they accelerated and the tractor would leave the tank behind. One day, Melby recalled sitting and watching while the enemy blew up seven transports but all of them unhooked and the drivers escaped unharmed. Then the helicopters were called in, and the enemy was cleaned out again.

Chester Stengrim

Chester Stengrim entered the U.S. Army as an enlisted man and retired a Lieutenant Colonel. He was a combat veteran of Korea



Chester Stengrim in the field at the radio. They set up a tent to work out of. (photo courtesy of Sally (Mrs. Chester) Stengri".)

and Vietnam. In Vietnam, Stengrim won the silver star for leading a successful attack against the North Vietnamese. He said the South Vietnamese were good soldiers but poorly led. Stengrim served as an advisor to a South Vietnamese unit and recalled that its commander was a well known coward and had refused to make this particular assault. "So I led that attack," Stengrim said, "we took the position and the troops did their job."



Chester Stengrim receiving the silver star. (photo courtesy of Sally (Mrs. Chester) Stengrim)

Submitted by *Felix Korczak*.

Our Citizens in the Military- Vietnam

People of the Greenbush area have served our country in every war since the inception of the town over a hundred years ago. We honor those who served, whether in war or peace. Each has added to the defense of our country, our freedom, and our way of life. Many have served these principles in capacities other than military, as well.

Each major conflict has had its dissenters, people who do not agree with the need or the wisdom of becoming involved. Usually, however, the dissention has been a quiet voice. Only one conflict has the distinction of being loudly and overwhelmingly opposed- the Vietnam War.

Of course, it is perfectly honorable to oppose a war on the basis of politics or belief. We can be loud, voice **our** opinions, demonstrate, vote, or withhold votes to make our opinions known. After all, the right to such opposition is a part of the freedom **that our** troops fight and die to defend. But to our eternal shame, the Vietnam opposition became ugly. The Americans who felt it was their

duty to respond to the call of their country, American soldiers, served honorably and bravely in Vietnam and were treated shabbily and without honor on their return.

American was in the throes of what could perhaps be termed the country's puberty or teen years. It was the age of the flower children, communes, drugs, peace at any cost, irresponsibility, and rebellion against the establishment. They were not only opposed to the war, but the American way of life itself. This no doubt colored the responses of many Americans, but is by no means an excuse for inexcusable behavior.

Many believe that the Vietnam War resolved nothing. Perhaps that is so. It is difficult to understand completely what effect any international incident has on the world political scene. But on the American home front, although certainly not worth the cost in lives and injuries, the Vietnam War brought America out of its teens into a new maturity. The country is now mature enough to respect the efforts of the military even in an unpopular war, mature enough to separate politics from the service. Most people now discredit the draft dodgers and respect the Vietnam vets who served bravely and honorably in an unpopular war. No war should be glorified, but American troops deserve our respect. May they always get it.

Although I did not live here at the time, I am proud to report that, for the most part, it seems that in the Greenbush area returning Vietnam era soldiers were treated fairly, decently, and with respect.

To quote Thomas Gifford, "I mention all this because it is- in a world of moral order- important that we remember such matters." Submitted by *Eunice Korczak*.

Veterans

World War One and World War Two were two of the most notable events of the 20th century. The numbers of countries involved, the sizes of armies, and the ability to slaughter millions were something the world had never experienced.

Since World War Two, America has been involved in other conflicts, most notably Korea, Vietnam, and two wars in the Middle East. Although none of these hostilities approached the scale of the world wars, the veterans of these succeeding wars suffered as much and felt the same fears as did their fathers and grandfathers.

Veterans organizations, the most prominent of which are The American Legion and The Veterans of Foreign Wars, in accordance with the by-laws under which they were founded, have not allowed into their ranks cold-war veterans or veterans of peace-time service. This does not diminish the contributions of these men and women in any way. It is well that we recognize them and their service to our country. America needs to be strong at all times, and the world needs to know it. The freedom of our people is something that is earned every single day, whether in war or in times of peace.

Between wars, a constant vigilance must always be maintained, and in that pursuit many peace-time veterans have experienced service more arduous than many war-time veterans. Some of our peace-time veterans have found themselves serving in remote areas and inhospitable climates to provide early warning information in the event of an attack, places such as Greenland, Alaska, and the Aleutian Islands. Many have spent months of boredom and stress on ocean bottoms monitoring the activities of potential enemies. Many have spent endless hours flying patrols on planes armed with deterrents to attacks or the capabilities of immediate retaliation. The lives of these veterans have been disrupted as much as those who

were called for service in times of war. Some have missed opportunities which would have benefited them, and all have made sacrifices for their country. No veteran's service should be considered less important, for without all of them our country would not be the world leader it is today.

Many Korean War veterans, returning home within days of serving on the front lines, were surprised to find a population seemingly unaware of a war at all. No rationing or apparent sacrifices were being made on the home front. They saw a country at peace and had to wonder if their sacrifices had any meaning, whether their service had been worthwhile. Our country did not seem to be in peril, and Korea became known as "The Forgotten War."

Vietnam veterans fared even worse. On their return, they often were greeted with insults, assaults, and derision. They were spat upon and called "baby killers;" their uniforms were badges of dishonor. Yet they served as honestly and as well as any and deserved better. Years later, too late for many, they finally are receiving their just reward as honorable soldiers. Only time and history will judge their contributions. Greenbush, however, welcomed home their own with the respect they were due.

At this writing, in our War Against Terror, veterans are looked upon with the respect and gratitude that was accorded the veterans of the World Wars.

Almost every returning veteran states, "How lucky we are to live in America compared to where I have just come from."

Yes, we are lucky. But our people who have been willing to serve, to sacrifice, have strongly influenced that "luck."

Submitted by Felix Korczak.

The Berlin Wall

Father and son see wall go up, come down

Rodney and Brad Erickson are sharing stories about a wall - the Berlin Wall. Rodney was stationed in Germany as a member of the Army's 28th Infantry, 24th Division. He spent from February 1960 to February 1962 in Germany. He was just days from going back home when the Berlin crisis erupted, extending his stay in Germany another four months.

Troops were put on "red alert" and all branches of the armed forces started doing maneuvers in case war would break out. Rodney said he had really never paid much attention to the Berlin Wall until that time. He said he finally saw the wall from about a mile away at one point during maneuvers and said it was "awesome."

During the red alert status, times were tense, according to Rodney. "It was scary. We were very unsure of the future," Rodney explained. The chaplain even came around to the men and had them make out their last wills and testaments. "One wrong move on anyone's part, and a war could have started. It's a good thing nothing happened," he commented.

Rodney was amazed at the "big barrier that separated the two countries. The day they closed the wall, it was near Christmas time. Families were split apart and lots of people were trying to escape. We heard stories of people trying to exchange gifts through the fences," he said.

He said he felt so bad for the people. "I wanted to go home so bad myself that I felt very sad about the people that could not make it to their own homes. I really want to appreciate the freedom I have, because those people were denied freedom."

When Rodney finally did get to go back to the U.S., he said he not only appreciated his freedom but also something very com-

mon. "It was nice to go back to the land of the round door knobs," he laughed. Every door in Germany had latches, according to Rodney.

Brad was stationed in Germany 30 years later and saw bits and pieces of the wall come down. He even chipped a chunk out of the now infamous wall himself.

Brad has just finished eight years with the Army. He was with 714 Military Intelligence and intercepted morse code while stationed there.

Located at a base that was eight to nine hours from Berlin, Brad only got to see the wall once during his duty in Germany. Brad had more of a sense of what the wall was than Rodney did because he had learned about the wall growing up, both from his father and in school.

"It's like day and night," Brad said. "On the west side of the wall, it's very modern and bright, and on the east side, it's gray and dark and everyone lived in poverty."

Not all Germans are happy with the wall coming down. Since the opening of the border, East Germans have flooded the other side and created a big financial burden for the westerners. One hundred marks were given to each East German that crossed the border - money from the western pocketbooks. Some West Germans felt like putting the wall back up because of the extreme financial burden - easterners looking for work, creating housing shortages, etc.

East Germany is also suffering because so many of its citizens are leaving. People are flocking to the west side leaving their homes and businesses. Especially small businesses are suffering, some even closing doors. According to Brad, money is a big concern for the German people and how they will all survive together. "The initial shock now that the wall is down is, 'What do we do now,'" Brad commented.

Both Rodney and Brad had different perspectives of the Berlin Wall, but both expressed the same feeling. "Being in the military, we both have a real feeling of accomplishment," Brad said. "We know that our time and energy wasn't wasted there and what we stand for is right," Rodney said.

The Berlin Wall stood for 30 years separating the German people from each other and also keeping one side from freedom. Many have crossed over that wall, and now that threat no longer exists.

Today, there are American soldiers all over the world standing up for the right of freedom. During this Memorial Day weekend, let each one of us pause a moment and think about what freedom means to us and how much those who died sacrificed for the freedom we have right now.

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Greenbush and the Race to Space

I recall a wondrous summer day in the year 1954 when I was a six-year-old lad. A huge balloon appeared in the sky north of Greenbush and hung suspended there for what seemed like hours on end. It was gigantic and shaped like a huge upright ice cream cone. It seemed so close that, certainly, it would come down somewhere near where the sheep palace is today.

I remember it being a warm day with blue skies. The cars in town were still parked diagonally in those days and everyone in town, whether walking down the sidewalks or crossing the street had their eyes glued to this unusual object. In no time at all, word spread that the Air Force was sending a crew to pick up the basket that was

suspended from the bottom of the balloon. Imagine, the Air Force was coming to Greenbush! Linda Evans overheard her father talking to someone and speculating whether the landing field in town would be large enough to accommodate one of their planes. But it was! The excitement was infectious and later that afternoon my Dad and I drove over to the airport to see what was going on.

We got there in time to join a huge crowd of people gathered around one of the hangars. The Air Force people impressed me tremendously with their snazzy uniforms and neat sunglasses. In my memory, what impressed me even more was that the box they were about to load into the aircraft contained a live monkey. What a daredevil that monkey had to have been to fly in a balloon at who knows what altitudes and for how long? The monkey seemed calm and collected and eyed the crowd as if to say, "What's the deal? It was a big deal to me, man, what a day!"

At this writing in the year, 2004, my recollection of this event has been met with skepticism and worse. Myrna Sovde in her Centennial column twice asked if anyone could corroborate my story. No one came forward and my sanity was in question, even I became somewhat suspicious. The Centennial Book Committee, in all of its research efforts, failed to find a single mention of this incident.

At long last, Linda Evans, who came home for deer season, proved my story by recalling her father's conversation, and shortly thereafter, Ed Efta remembered that the balloon had come down in a field owned by Floyd Blawat Sr. and that, "there was plastic everywhere."

Later, Floyd Blawat Jr. recalled the incident clearly. He said that the basket containing, "The monkey and mice, or whatever, detached itself from the balloon and parachuted down and landed on land belonging to Ellerd Paulson." He also told me that his family was allowed to keep the balloon. The entire thing was constructed of plastic and covered with heavy nylon netting. He said they cut it up into pieces and used it for various purposes on the farm. I was later informed that Paulson's daughter, Gloria, had **actually** found the basket where it had landed.

I was vindicated. My sanity remains intact, but so many questions remained unanswered until Linda Blumer found the long lost article on microfiche in the Roseau County Museum research center.

The article, headlined "Experimental Balloon Lands in Vicinity," illustrates wonderfully the excitement of an event such as this in a small rural community. It appeared in the August 5th, 1954, issue of the Greenbush Tribune.

"Henry Hess was the first to report the balloon to the local Ground Observer Corps at about 2:45 p.m. The call was immediately put in to the Filter Center at Minneapolis. Some time later a C-47 was reported circling the area. When officials were told that the balloon had landed and that people were out looking for them, they stressed the importance of following the accompanying instructions and handling the instruments with care. Apparently, the center had received calls all along the line.

When the balloon was punctured and separated from a small parachute, M.W. Peterson and Stanley R. Evans took off in a car following the balloon, and Harry Prosser and Harold Nelson headed after the smaller parachute in the Prosser pickup truck. Prosser reports that they watched the smaller parachute and bundle, land a mile southeast of the Ellerd Paulson farm and noticed the plane, apparently observing the location, so he and Nelson headed back to the airport. The plan was to have Prosser circle the spot in his small plane to help the ground men locate it. As they were nearing the

airport, they were surprised to see the big plane land, but no more surprised than the crew was to find a pickup truck ready for immediate service.

When the men arrived at the approximate location, they were debating which of two small groves of trees to enter. Just then Gloria Paulson came from one of the groves and said that the equipment was there. The Air Force men immediately checked the animals, including 85 mice, two monkeys, and numerous flies and other insects. The animals were marked with different colors and other distinguishing identification."

In April 2004, nearly fifty years after "the great balloon adventure," Linda Blumer conducted interviews with Gloria Paulson Skrutvold and Arthur Bulow who was with her at the time. They had been making hay for Ellerd Paulson that day. Skrutvold recalls very little of the incident saying that all she could remember was the capsule coming down and landing near them. Bulow, on the other hand, had several memories of the day. He recalls seeing two or three planes circling the area at very low altitudes and appearing as if they wanted to land. He stated that Melvin Blumer was in the vicinity and motioned for the planes not to land because the land was swampy and contained several holes. Bulow recalls seeing the capsule detach itself from the larger balloon and float down to the ground while the balloon itself was carried northwest by the air currents.

According to Bulow the capsule was gray and had straps around it. In a short time, the military men arrived and opened the container. He remembered seeing a monkey in a cage and several mice in a separate cage, some of which had escaped and were running loose in the bottom of the container. He recalls one of the Air Force men exclaiming, "They're alive!"

Bulow recalls being rewarded in the amount of twenty or twenty-five dollars while Skrutvold has no such recollection. Fifty years will cloud one's memory. I, personally do not remember seeing two monkeys or any mice at all not to mention flies or other insects.

The Tribune article continues:

"During this time, Peterson and Evans followed the balloon and found it being inspected by Floyd Blawat in a field of his oats. Later information revealed that it was 180 feet in length, uninflated. It was made of plastic and shaped like an inverted teardrop. The balloon had been released at Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan and had been traced from there. The members of the Air Force seemed very happy over the promptness with which they were able to find the instruments and accompanying experimental equipment and with the cooperation they received (from the Greenbush people). They reported that the balloon had flown over 92,000 feet high, according to recording instruments attached. One of the instruments was designed to test the effect of cosmic rays, it was reported.

A crowd gathered to inspect the ship and watch it take off at about 6:45 p.m. It was the end of an interesting day for many local citizens as the plane circled the field low, dipped the wing in salute, and quickly gained altitude as it headed for home."

The C-47 and its crew with its cargo returned to a base in New Mexico and Greenbush had enjoyed its brush with greatness in America's race to space.

"Support Our Troops"



Albin Pulczinski, taken in 1943, was a Prisoner of War in WWII. (photo courtesy of Jenny Pulczinski)



Felix Korczak, writer of this military section, was in the U.S. Army during the Vietnam era. (photo courtesy of Eunice Korczak)



Felix Korczak coming home to Greenbush pictured with his siblings Robert, Ken, Mike, and Mary. (photo courtesy of Eunice Korczak)



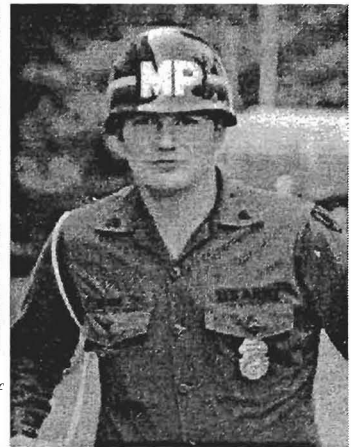
Gerald "Jerry" Johnson serving in the U.S. Navy on the USS Luiseno (ATF-156) from 1959-1962. (photo courtesy of Myrna (Johnson) Sovde)



Paul Everson in Marines November 11, 1969. (photo courtesy of Paul Everson)



PFC John J. Wilebski, 1944, was in the Battle of the Bulge. (photo courtesy of Doris Wilebski)



Steven Sovde in Germany in 1980. (photo courtesy of Myrna Sovde)



Kristin Berge in the 142 National Guard out of Wahpeton, ND was deployed for 14 months to Iraq (2004). (photo courtesy of Kathryn Berge)



Robert Harders, Second Marine Division, World War II. (photo courtesy of Robert Harders)



Sean Everson in the Marines in 2004. (photo courtesy of Paul Everson)



2nd Lieutenant Bob Wollin B-25 Pilot in the Army Air Corp. (photo courtesy of Bob Wollin)