

# THE BUGLE

WINTER 2011  
VOLUME 17:4

QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF THE WISCONSIN VETERANS MUSEUM

## IN THIS ISSUE

FRITZ EMIL WOLF

*Story of a WWII Fighter Pilot*

Pilot Fritz E. Wolf in uniform  
of Claire Chennault's famed  
American Volunteer Group - The  
Flying Tigers.





FROM THE DIRECTOR

## REMEMBERING

As I sat down to write this article on November 11, Veterans Day, my intent was to reflect upon the activities that have brought the Museum closer to the end of another year. The usual summation of the great things that we do here at WVM every year seemed like a good way to wrap up the last issue of *The Bugle* for 2011. I can't help but think that it is more appropriate to reflect upon our Wisconsin Veterans rather than our annual institutional accomplishments; we can do that later.

We are fond of saying that every day is Veterans Day at the

Wisconsin Veterans Museum. How could it be otherwise? We are surrounded by things that resonate with stories of Wisconsin's veterans. In this issue you will read stories about three men who, although separated by time, embody commonly held traits that link them together among a long line of veterans. We start with the account of the intrepid naval combat flying ace Fritz Wolf, a native of Madison by way of Shawano, Wisconsin who flew with Claire Chennault's Flying Tigers in China, and later with the US Navy. Wolf's story is followed by the tragic account of an English immigrant, John Hunt, who settled in Wisconsin in the years just before the Civil War, only to perish in Richmond's infamous Libby Prison. You'll also read about Chester A. Isermann whose story is decidedly different. A Quartermaster First Class, Isermann's ship, the Coast Guard Cutter *Tuscarora*, was transferred to the Navy during WWI along with its officers and crew. The Kenosha native spent his wartime service on special duty in the east Atlantic – far from the *Tuscarora's* usual home port of Milwaukee.

Hunt, Isermann and Wolf were historically separated by dozens of years, several major wars and several minor conflicts. Their military technologies were light years apart as were their daily routines. Wolf, the World War II aviator, could only imagine what Hunt experienced as a

soldier in the 7th Wisconsin. He may have read about the Iron Brigade in books, but the idea of advancing shoulder to shoulder in line of battle under musket and cannon fire was a relic of a far away past. Likewise, Hunt could never have imagined Wolf's airplane, let alone landing one on the deck of a ship. As a resident of Kenosha, Isermann may have known veterans of Hunt's Iron Brigade, but their ancient exploits were long ago events separated by more than fifty years from the Great War. To a twentieth century man engaged in WWI naval operations, Gettysburg might as well have been Thermopylae.

These are but a few of the "stories" that live in the Wisconsin Veterans Museum. They are different to be sure, but Hunt, Isermann and Wolf are representative of thousands of Wisconsin's veterans who left home in defense of freedom. Although separated by time, they are linked by a common bond. The World War II aviator, the Iron Brigade member and the WWI sailor, are part of a continuum of Wisconsin veterans that begins in the past but carries into the future. It is good to remember them.

# WISCONSIN VETERANS MUSEUM MEMBERSHIP LEVELS AND BENEFITS

## INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIP - \$30

- Quarterly Newsletter – *The Bugle*
- Friends of WVM Pin
- Invitations to Members-Only Events

## FAMILY MEMBERSHIP - \$45

- Quarterly Newsletter – *The Bugle*
- Friends of WVM Pin
- Invitations to Members-Only Events
- 10% WVM Gift Shop Discount

## INDIVIDUAL LIFETIME MEMBERSHIP - \$1,200

- Quarterly Newsletter – *The Bugle*
- Special Lifetime Membership Friends of the WVM Pin
- 20% Discount in WVM Gift Shop
- Invitation to Members-Only Events
- Behind-the-Scenes Tours
- WVM Calendar
- Individual Recognition on League of Honor Wall

## BRONZE STAR CORPORATE MEMBERSHIP - \$350 (10 EMPLOYEES OR LESS)

- 5 copies of Quarterly Newsletter – *The Bugle*
- 5 Friends of WVM Pins
- 10% Discount in WVM Gift Shop for all employees
- Invitations to Members-Only Events
- Free Rental of Education Center Facility (once per year)
- Behind-the-Scenes Tour

## GOLD STAR CORPORATE MEMBERSHIP - \$1,000 (MORE THAN 10 EMPLOYEES)

- 20 copies of Quarterly Newsletter – *The Bugle*
- 20 Friends of the WVM Pins
- 15% Discount in WVM Gift Shop for all employees
- Invitations to Members-Only Events
- Free Rental of Education Center Facility (twice per year)
- Behind the Scenes Tours (twice per year)
- Corporate Recognition on League of Honor Wall





FROM THE ARCHIVES

## WOUNDED WARRIORS

The Civil War produced a generation of leaders in Wisconsin. Jeremiah M. Rusk (top row, fourth from the left), affectionately known as "Uncle Jerry," served as an officer with the 25th Wisconsin Infantry. Wounded at Kennesaw Mountain, Georgia, he later served as governor of Wisconsin from 1882 to 1889. In 1887, Rusk, and over a dozen wounded veterans from Wisconsin, posed for this photograph at the Grand Army of the Republic encampment in St. Louis. The crutches, canes, prosthetics, and empty sleeves serve as a reminder of the cost of war and the sacrifices that these men made 150 years ago to preserve the Union.

**LANCE HERDEGEN**  
AUTHOR



## AND THE BANDS PLAYED, "HOME, SWEET HOME"

On July 30, 1864, a mine was exploded under the Confederate earthworks at Petersburg in an attempt to open a gap in the enemy lines. The regiments of the old Iron Brigade—the Second, Sixth, Seventh Wisconsin, Nineteenth Indiana, and Twenty-fourth Michigan—witnessed what General Grant later called the “saddest affair I have witnessed in the war.”

For several weeks leading up to the explosion, a group of Pennsylvania miners, now soldiers, had tunneled more than 500 feet, carrying out the dirt in cracker boxes. Finally, 8,000 pounds of powder was laid in the cavity shaped under a Confederate fort. The blast at dawn lifted 500 yards of Confederate trench. “Slowly, the great heaps of earth, timbers, cannon, a regiment of men, its tents, gun carriages and caissons climbed higher and higher,” said one witness. “Then there was a parting, Timbers, men, guns, tents were scattered to the right and to the left; to the front and the rear. Oh. What a sight! At least one poor fellow was thrown clear over the Union lines.” Pvt. William Ray of the Seventh Wisconsin described the scene: “Half past 4:00 arrived and with it the shaking of the ground awakened me. I rocked to and fro, looked at the ground to see the crack that might engulf me...the mine had burst. There were...parts of things whirling and whizzing in the area. It was a grand sight.... Just as soon as the thing burst, hundreds of pieces of artillery and different kinds and thousands of small arms belched forth Death and Destruction into the enemy’s lines. I fired as fast as I could... Five minutes after the fort blew up, our men piled over and into the fort and we see rebs coming in. Oh how our boys cursed and damned them and damned the officers for not reinforcing our brave fellows when the rebs would charge on them....”

The watching Union soldiers opened fire to support the attack through the gap in the Confederate line to no avail. “The firing continued throughout much of the day and in the end nothing was accomplished except a growing list of killed and wounded. Our men gained the enemy’s works and took their line, and the position held would have broken the rebel army,” wrote Lt. Col. Rufus Dawes of the Sixth Wisconsin. “But victory stands with the enemy, who drove our men out and regained all they had lost.”

It was an event the Sunday following the explosion, however, that touched on the strange war between people who shared so many things—language, history, culture—but were so far apart on others. With enemies still across from each other in their earthworks, a truce was called from noon until dark so parties from both sides could bury the dead. About 6 p.m., the watching Federal soldiers were surprised by a remarkable sight: “For more than a mile along the Confederate front stood

men, women and children on the enemy’s breastworks, not soldiers, but men in citizen’s clothes, their wives, their children.”

The two sides stood quietly looking across the field over the heads of the burial parties on the field. Then, after several minutes, somewhere behind the enemy lines, a Confederate band began to play “Dixie” and the bright blast of music caused the enemy soldiers and civilians to raise a cheer and wave handkerchiefs as the Federal soldiers watched. As the last notes died, the Union bands responded with the “Star Spangled Banner.” And so it went for an hour, with the Confederates coming back with “Bonnie Blue Flag” and the Federals answering with “Yankee Doodle.”

Just as the “shades of night” were appearing, the witness said, the Federal bands—as many as two dozen—began to play “Home, Sweet Home.” No cheer followed. “Within a few minutes from the time our bands ceased to play,” the watcher said, “the Confederate bands, a great number of them, took up the same beautiful, impressive strains, played ‘Home, Sweet Home,’ as our folks had played it, and then there was a mighty cheer along both lines of battle.”

After a time, the citizens went back to Petersburg, and “our forces settled down to their old modes of living; the next day the cannon began to roar, the mortars to heave their shells and shot back and forth, and the sharp shooters to pick off the unwary.”



*Alfred Waud's sketch of Federal troops moving into action at the Crater provides a sense of the enormity of the explosion and the close combat nature of the battle. Waud whimsically drew a pair of giant shoes on the soldier at the rear of the column.*

This is an excerpt and republished with permission from Lance J. Herdegen, *The Iron Brigade in the Civil War: Bull Run to Appomattox, 1861-1865* (Savas Beatie 2012). The book will be available spring 2012 in bookstores nationwide or directly from the publisher: [www.savasbeatie.com](http://www.savasbeatie.com) (916-941-6896).

**JENNIFER CARLSON**  
MARKETING & DEVELOPMENT  
DIRECTOR



## MUSEUM NEWS MORE THAN A NEW LOOK!

The Museum launched a new website in October making it easier for everyone to discover and connect with Wisconsin's rich military past. Educators can find online resources, kids can participate in fun activities and you can view our Civil War battle flags collection and genealogy databases online. You will discover something new everytime you visit.

From the virtual tours of our exhibits, to photos from our collections, we are bringing the Museum to your living room or classroom with a simple click of the mouse. Our website is the place to go whether you are an educator, student, researcher, veteran, or just a lover of history.

Start exploring today! Visit [www.wisvetsmuseum.com](http://www.wisvetsmuseum.com).

## WVM RECEIVES GRANT

Recently, the National Endowment for the Humanities in conjunction with the American Library Association, awarded a grant to the Wisconsin Veterans Museum for a library-based initiative called "Making Sense of the American Civil War." WVM was chosen to administer a statewide reading and discussion program for libraries, museums, and other cultural institutions. The museum is tasked with choosing four sites for the 2012-2013 calendar year to host a series of five sessions where participants discuss books by Geraldine Brooks, James McPherson, and an anthology edited by Edward L. Ayers. The Wisconsin Veterans Museum will be the repository for one hundred copies of each of these books, to be disseminated throughout the state to host institutions. We look forward to working with the host institutions and scholars to facilitate life-long learning among Wisconsin's citizens.

## MUSEUM VIDEO RECEIVES A WAVE!

The Wisconsin Veterans Museum's promotional video won another award! On November 9th, the Museum won a WAVE award at the Pyle Center in Madison, taking home the highest honor for best in Corporate Image. The video was shot and directed by Reel Wave Media, a Madison-based video production company. The WAVE awards recognizes the very best in web, audio and video media productions in the Greater Madison area. The video can be seen on our website at [www.wisvetsmuseum.com](http://www.wisvetsmuseum.com).

### STAFF IN THE SPOTLIGHT

## KRISTINE ZICKHUR

by Michael Telzrow

Kris Zickuhr has held the position of registrar at the Museum since March 2002. Her background in information management stretches back to her days as an Electronic Warfare Analyst and Linguist while on active duty with the U. S. Army from 1990-1994. Along the way she served with the Bureau of Land Management and the Colorado Historical Society. Recently, she has lent her considerable skills to the Museum as the Acting Assistant Director, where she has ably managed the Museum's operating budget, procurement and facilities initiatives since the departure of Lynne Wolfe in June 2011.



Working closely with the Collections Manager, Kris ensures that the paperwork associated with an incoming acquisition is properly executed. That includes maintaining secure custody of the objects, and processing temporary receipts and certificates of gift. She also oversees the Museum's loan program and management of the collections environment.

Records maintenance is only part of the registrar's job. Kris oversees the development and implementation of the Museum's flag conservation program. Her growing knowledge of the battle flag collection has enhanced the Museum's ability to conserve and interpret one of Wisconsin's most valued historical collections. Conservation of the flags began in the 1990s. About 80 remain in need of conservation; some of them are still furled on their flag staffs. Zickuhr has been at the forefront of advancing new methods of conservation. Older methods that were essentially non-reversible and somewhat destructive have given way to a non-invasive approach that is easily reversible. In addition to flag conservation, Zickuhr also oversees the preservation and conservation of other three-dimensional objects such as the recently acquired Confederate belt plate excavated near the site where Rebel soldiers disembarked at Prairie du Chien on their way to Madison. Conservators in Chicago removed potentially damaging accretions from the belt plate.

Congratulations Kris on being selected this quarter's spotlight staff member!

**RICHARD WOLF**  
GUEST COLUMNIST

A STORY OF A WORLD WAR II FIGHTER PILOT

# FRITZ EMIL WOLF



*American history is replete with examples of men who, determined to fight in the cause of freedom, volunteered their services in defense of a foreign nation. Such were the men of the American Volunteer Group of the Chinese Air Force. Drawn from the Navy, Marines and Army Air Corps, the AVG would begin training in the summer and fall of 1941. Under the direction of Claire L. Chennault, a retired US Army Air Corps Officer, the 99 men of the AVG saw their first action just twelve days after the attack on Pearl Harbor. Known for the shark-faced Curtiss P-40s, the men of Chennault's "Flying Tigers" would go down in aviation history as one of the most storied combat squadrons.*

*In 2011, the children of AVG ace pilot Fritz Wolf donated his Flying Tiger material to the Wisconsin Veterans Museum. The collection ranks as perhaps the most complete Flying Tiger collection in the nation. The following is the story of Fritz Wolf as written by his son Richard. The Wisconsin Veterans Museum extends its gratitude to the members of the Wolf family who made the donation possible – Catherine White, Linda Ryckeghem, and Richard Wolf.*

*~Michael Telzrow, Director*

## *With the Flying Tigers*

Fritz E. Wolf was born in Shawano, Wisconsin on February 8, 1916. He attended Shawano High School where he excelled in leadership, character and athletics, graduating in 1933. His athletic prowess on the gridiron and basketball court earned him a basketball scholarship from Carroll College in Waukesha, Wisconsin. He never played a basketball game for the school. Instead he turned to football, becoming an all-conference fullback for three straight years. During that time Carroll only lost one game. In 1938 Fritz graduated from Carroll College with a degree in Business Administration. He had the opportunity to try out with the Green Bay Packers but missed the tryout do to an appendicitis attack. About this time Fritz realized that if he was ever going to satisfy his dream to learn to fly, now was the time. In 1939, he enlisted in the United States Navy. Upon completion of flight training in 1940, he received a commission as an Ensign and assignment as a dive-bomber pilot aboard the USS Saratoga. In the summer of 1941, Fritz resigned his commission to join the American Volunteer Group (AVG) Flying Tigers. Like a lot of other pilots, he was looking for a little more excitement.

My father sailed in the first contingent of AVG pilots from San Francisco on July 6, 1941 aboard the Jaegersfontein. His passport read agriculture student. The AVG arrived at Toungoo, Burma sometime in September of that year. The first month after his arrival was spent getting the P-40 aircraft ready for combat. The rest of the time was spent learning to fight the Japanese. This was accomplished through one-hour lectures given by Chennault and a lot of simulated dogfights. On December 20, 1941, he took part in the first AVG action near Kunming, China. During that battle, he shot down two Mitsubishi bombers and assisted in downing a third before his ammunition ran out. During the month of February in 1942, somewhere near Rangoon, Burma, Fritz took part in a dog fight with 14 Japanese fighters. He was able to shoot down one before he had to break contact. This victory was confirmed, but combat records were lost. On April 8, 1942, near Loiwing, China, he took part

in another AVG action during which time he shot down two Japanese fighters.

On April 17, 1942, near Magwee, China, Fritz was caught on the airfield's grounds during a Japanese bombing raid. This was the most terrifying time during his tour with the AVG. Charlie Bond, one of Fritz's squadron mates, remarked in his diary that even Fritz Wolf was scared, "and Fritz is no baby."

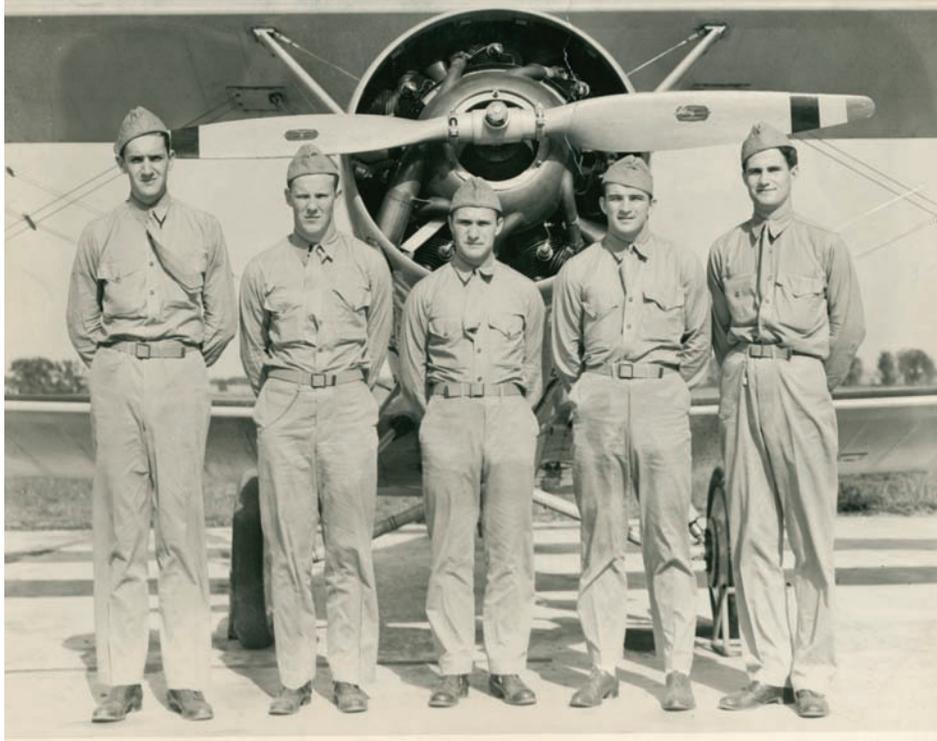
During his tour with the AVG, Fritz was subject to unhealthy conditions and illness. Anticipating his death, a coffin was built for him. Because of his illnesses he spent significant time on the ground. During that time he assumed operational duties. Like everything else he did, Wolf performed admirably. Chennault praised him for his administrative skills. Fritz Wolf was honorably discharged on July 4, 1942. By that time he had logged 220 hours of combat flying in the skies over Burma and China fighting the Japanese. The Chinese Government awarded him the White Cloud Banner 6th Grade for heroism, China Air Force Wings 2 and 4 star, and China War Memorial Decoration.

### *Return to the Navy*

After coming back to the United States to recover (he had lost 40 pounds in China), Fritz returned to the Navy with the rank of Lieutenant, senior grade. He was assigned as a fighter pilot instructor at Jacksonville Naval Air Station in Florida. He was later transferred to Green Cove Springs, Florida to train with other replacement pilots that were preparing to be shipped over seas.

Fritz was the team's section leader. Fritz and his team were eventually assigned to the USS Hornet on January 8, 1945. Flying Grumman F6F Hellcats during his time in VF-11

served as Executive Officer. During this time he made application to the regular Navy, but was turned down for health reasons. His life in aviation was not over, however. He stayed in the Naval Reserve, retiring in 1967 as a Commander. For his service to his country during World War II Fritz E. Wolf received the following awards and decorations: Two Distinguished Flying Crosses, Air Medal, Presidential Unit Citation Award, WWII Victory Medal, Three Stars Asiatic Pacific Campaign Medal, One Star Philippine Liberation Medal, American Defense Service Medal and American



*Fritz Wolf (second from left) posing with fellow cadets while training as a naval aviator in 1940 (Mss 2011.102).*

(the Sun Downers), Fritz and the rest of the squadron struck Japanese targets in Hong Kong, Formosa, Hainan Island and French Indo-China. On one mission over Formosa, his plane lost fuel pressure and he was forced to make a sea landing. After three hours floating around in the ocean he was finally picked up by a destroyer. He later said that being plucked out of the water was worse than drowning.

When the Hornet reached Ulithi after conclusion of its South China Sea action in early February of 1945, Fritz was made CO of the newly formed VBF-3 squadron aboard the USS Yorktown. His squadron would participate in strikes supporting the invasion of Iwo Jima. He also led the first historic naval carrier-based bombing attack against targets on mainland Japan. During this mission he officially shot down his fifth plane making him an ace. He was also awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for his heroic action. He was later transferred to Naval Auxiliary Air Station, Brown Field, Chula Vista, California, where he

Campaign Medal.

### *Post War Career*

In April 1946, Fritz became the first paid employee of the new Wisconsin Aeronautics Commission. Fritz served in an operational capacity until September of 1967 when he was appointed Director of Aeronautics. When the Aeronautics Commission merged with the newly-formed Department of Transportation, Fritz was named Bureau Director. He retired from state service in May of 1981, after 35 years of distinguished service ensuring Wisconsin's role as a leader in aviation.

In 1989, Fritz E. Wolf was inducted into the Wisconsin Aviation Hall of Fame. Seventeen years later, the State of Wisconsin honored his contributions to the aviation industry by renaming the State Aviation Facility at the Dane County Regional Airport in Madison, the "Fritz E. Wolf Aviation Center".

*By Richard Wolf*

**JENNIFER KOLLATH**  
CURATOR OF EDUCATION



## 2011 CEMETERY TOUR - A HUGE SUCCESS!

The Wisconsin Veterans Museum would like to thank everyone for their support of the 2011 Talking Spirits cemetery tour. This year was our best tour to date. Over 3,200 people attended, including 2,700 students from Madison to La Farge. Increasing popularity among teachers compelled WVM staff to add an extra day to the tour program in order to meet demand. Visitors to the cemetery enjoyed an experience that included first-rate acting, our knowledgeable tour guides, and the beauty of fall colors. What a great way to learn about Wisconsin's role in the Civil War! In addition, we would like to thank the Dane County Cultural Affairs Committee for their generous grant which enabled us to offer the popular event.



*Local actors wearing period dress portray Governor Louis Harvey and his wife Cordelia Harvey for a group of students at this year's tour.*

**GREG LAWSON**  
STORE MANAGER



## HOLIDAY HIGHLIGHTS

FROM THE WVM GIFTSHOP

With the holidays drawing near, sometimes finding that perfect gift can be difficult. The Wisconsin Veterans Museum has some wonderful gift ideas for you. From reproductions to apparel, you can find that perfect gift for your loved one, and this year we made it easier to shop. Now you can buy that perfect gift online. Visit our website at [www.wisvetsmuseum.com](http://www.wisvetsmuseum.com) and click on gift store to start shopping today!

Wait there is more! The Gift Store is also offering 20% off all books and DVDs through the holiday season. Browse our extensive selection online ([www.wisvetsmuseum.com](http://www.wisvetsmuseum.com)) or stop by 30 West Mifflin Street on the Capitol Square in downtown Madison, Wisconsin. Happy holidays to you and yours!



### A GIFT TO REMEMBER

2012 CIVIL WAR CALENDAR

The Wisconsin Veterans Museum 2012 Wall Calendar, features unique images from our collection and is highlighted with daily historical entries corresponding to 1862. \$12.95

## HONORING VETERANS

FROM THE STATE'S CAPITOL

The holidays are here and the Capitol is honoring our State's veterans and their service by showcasing items from the Wisconsin Veterans Museum collections.

Staff members pulled a number of items from the collection with interesting stories relating to holiday traditions, which were maintained by service members while serving overseas. One of the many items on display includes a cotton robe brought home by Fritz Wolf of Shawano, Wisconsin, the WWII fighter pilot featured in this issue.

Drop by the State's Capitol and learn more about these collections on display until the New Year or visit us on Facebook to see photographs.



*WVM Curator of History Jeff Kollath places reproduction holiday cards, dating back to the Spanish-American War, which were sent to and from service members in the field, on the Capitol Christmas tree.*





**ANDREA HOFFMAN**  
COLLECTIONS MANAGER

FROM THE COLLECTIONS

## DEATH AT LIBBY PRISON

On the first day of July, 1863 at the onset of the most famous battle of the Civil War, John Hunt of Rutland, Wisconsin hastily closed a letter home to his wife Mary with the line “Orders to march right off so I must stop.” He then headed onto the battlefields of Gettysburg, and it was there on Cemetery Hill that Hunt was taken prisoner by Confederate soldiers. According to Hunt’s grandson, he spent his months as a prisoner in Richmond, Virginia at the infamous Libby Prison. There he succumbed to typhoid around the 16th of October. This selection of small items—a simple hand-sewn cotton bag, four uniform buttons bearing the state seal of Wisconsin, and a miniature pair of hand-carved pliers—are all that remain from his harrowing experience as a prisoner of war.

John Hunt was actually English by birth, born in 1836 in the town of Hilgay in Norfolk County. During the spring of 1839, his family immigrated to the United States, eventually settling in Rutland near Stoughton in south central Wisconsin. In 1859, he wed English bride Mary Carlson. One year later she gave birth to a son named John. Shortly thereafter, Hunt enlisted with the Union Army on the 4th of September, 1861, joining Company D of the 7th Wisconsin Regiment. After some rudimentary training at Madison’s Camp Randall, he was sent by train in November of 1861 to Washington, D.C. to join the Army of the Potomac.

Hunt sent dozens of letters home, the collection of which is now also housed at the Wisconsin Veterans

Museum archives. As a part of the famed Iron Brigade, he witnessed and recorded his experiences at events such as the Second Battle of Bull Run. Several more letters came later as he was healing at the Convalescent Camp in Virginia late in 1862. After writing his wife from



*An assortment of Hunt’s last possessions at Libby Prison, 1863.*

the first day at Gettysburg, he sent one last letter home the next day, relaying to Mary, “Since I wrote yesterday we have marched 6 miles and fought a terrible Battle, first driving the Rebs, then got drove and I am a prisoner”. He later added to the letter in pencil, “Night, and an awful Battle has raged all day. Don’t know the result but hear that we are whipped....We expect to start for Richmond tomorrow so now good bye for a time. I will be alright.” This letter contained his last written words.

Libby Prison, located in the Confederate capitol of Richmond, was a repurposed tobacco factory

which primarily imprisoned Union officers since the start of the war. It was here among the harsh conditions of disease and overcrowding that Hunt would ultimately perish in October of 1863. The disturbing conditions only worsened as the war progressed, causing outrage in the

North. On November 28, 1863, an article in the New York Times reported of Libby Prison, “Of late the percentage of deaths has greatly increased, the result of causes that have been long at work—such as insufficient food, clothing and shelter, combined with that depression of spirits brought on so often by long confinement.” Before he died, Hunt engaged in a time-honored practice for prisoners of war faced with long hours of inactivity and boredom – he whittled and carved.

An agonizing nine months after his capture, Mary Hunt finally received word on the fate of her imprisoned husband from Lewis S. Isham, an officer with the 7th Wisconsin. Isham did not note enclosures with

his April 14th letter, but perhaps this is when the small collection of John Hunt’s hand-made items were returned to his home. Hunt’s possessions were passed down to his only son, and from there to his son Henry James Hunt, who carefully ordered and transcribed his grandfather’s letters. Decades later, the great-great granddaughters assured the long term preservation of these family heirlooms by entrusting them to the Wisconsin Veterans Museum. Nearly 150 years later, they remain a tangible reminder of the many sacrifices and sufferings of those who fought in the American Civil War.



## FROM THE PRESIDENT - ALAN HEMBEL A YEAR IN REVIEW

Dear Friends,

2011 was a momentous year for the Wisconsin Veterans Museum Foundation. In this time of economic uncertainty, the Foundation substantially elevated its performance by employing a number of successful initiatives.

After a lengthy period of planning, the foundation instituted a non-voting membership program for WVM supporters in March 2011. Since its inception, the membership program has brought in \$21,600 in program-supporting revenue. Moving forward, the membership program will significantly reduce the publication cost of the Museum's quarterly publication, *The Bugle*. Likewise, fundraising efforts improved markedly in 2011 through the use of more effective strategies that included the implementation of a targeted annual appeal program, and the production of an award-winning DVD. Total



Two visitors explore the interactive capabilities of the Museum's new multi-touch gesture table. The table was funded by the John E. Wall Family & Demco, Inc.

fundraising income improved by 37 percent in 2011 (\$160,691 in 2010 to \$220,528 in 2011). Best of all, over 95 percent of the funds raised by the Foundation went directly to supporting Wisconsin Veterans Museum public programs, exhibit development, conservation and collections acquisitions.

In July 2011, we opened *From Paper to Iron*, our first in a series of Civil War Sesquicentennial exhibits. The State provided partial support for this exhibit, but much of the funding was secured by the Foundation. A multi-touch table, which meaningfully elevated the interactive potential of the exhibit, was provided by the generous support of the John E. Wall Family & Demco Inc.

Funding for conservation of our battle flags became a priority for the Foundation in 2011. Capitalizing on a significant anonymous donation, the Foundation provided funding for three battle flags in 2011 and has committed funds for the complete conservation of one battle flag in 2012. Foundation resources also funded the acquisition of a significant Civil War photographic collection of



The 6th Wisconsin National flag provides a good example of the work funded by the Wisconsin Veterans Museum Foundation. Conservators at the New York State Office of Parks and Recreation used newer non-invasive techniques to conserve this flag.

members of the 1st Wisconsin Heavy Artillery.

Our primary fundraising events enjoyed another successful year. Nearly 300 of our supporters attended the annual gala that featured the noted military novelist, Jeff Shaara, and our golf outing continued to meet its annual goal.

Moving forward, it will become increasingly important for the Foundation to continue to improve its fundraising activities. Recent accomplishments have laid the ground work for future success, but none of this was possible without the support of our friends, both new and old. As always, thank you for your continued support!

Happy holidays!

# THANK YOU DONORS!

A most sincere thank you to all who donated to the Foundation in 2011. We cannot provide quality programming and award-winning exhibits without your help.

## \$5,000 AND ABOVE

BAIRD FOUNDATION, INC.  
GODFREY & KAHN ATTORNEYS AT LAW  
JOHN E. WALL FAMILY & DEMCO, INC.  
MADISON GAS & ELECTRIC FOUNDATION

## \$2,500 TO \$4,999

OPEN PANTRY  
JEROME FRAUTSCHI  
STEPHEN HURLEY

## \$1,000 TO \$2,499

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PLACON  
POTTER LAWSON, INC.  
SPACESAVER CORPORATION  
UW HEALTH  
LEWIS B HARNED, MD  
MARY KOLAR  
MARVIN J LEVY  
DENNIS WAGNER

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OSHKOSH CORPORATION  
SMITH & GESTELAND, LLP  
STORAGE SYSTEMS MIDWEST  
WISCONSIN PHYSICIANS SERVICE  
ALAN BOOTHBY  
TED DUCKWORTH  
RALPH & ERICA KAUTEN  
RAYMOND & DIANE MAIDA  
RANDY SAFRANEK  
RJ SAFRANEK  
LEE & DAR SCHUFF  
FRED & NANCY SLOAN

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AMERICAN LEGION POST 111  
ANN CARDINALE REAL ESTATE, LLC  
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DISABLED AMVETS, DEPT OF WI  
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NEW GLARUS BREWING COMPANY  
RSM MCGLADREY, INC  
VFW BADGER POST 328  
VFW EDWIN FROHMADER POST 1879  
VFW ZUNKER HELD POST 3358  
VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA, INC, CHPT 115  
WEGNER CPAS & CONSULTANTS, LLP  
WHITE PINE CONSULTING SERVICE, INC  
WI AUTOMOBILE & TRUCK DEALERS ASSOCIATION  
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“WHO THE HELL SAID SAILOR,  
I’M IN THE COAST GUARD.”  
~JOHN ISERMANN



Four “boots” pose in this photo likely taken in the early months of Isermann’s first enlistment in 1917. He appears in the center, back row.

Recently, our friends at the Kenosha Museums transferred an extraordinary collection containing the personal effects of a WWI sailor. Included in the grouping are three photo albums, and wartime diaries that provide a detailed account of John Isermann’s experiences aboard the USS *Tuscarora*, CG. Together they provide a rare look into the daily routine of a WWI-era sailor.

John Chester Aloysius Isermann enlisted on May 5, 1917, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The Kenosha native was just shy of his twenty-second birthday when the United States entered World War I. His records show that he enlisted in Milwaukee where he was assigned to the Coast Guard Cutter *Tuscarora*. His association with the Coast Guard was brief,

however. The United States had just entered the war and on April 6, 1917 control of all Coast Guard ships and personnel was shifted to the U. S. Navy. At the time, the Coast Guard numbered approximately 5,000 officers and men. For the duration of the war they would serve under the direction of the Navy.

Isermann’s ship, the USS *Tuscarora*, CG, was built in Richmond, Virginia in 1901, at a cost of \$173,184. Shortly after commissioning, she was assigned to duty on the Great Lakes. The 178 foot cruising cutter’s top speed was 4.2 knots – slow by today’s standards but adequate for its time. Based out of Milwaukee, she plied Lake Michigan and Lake Superior where her complement of 65 officers and men engaged in law enforcement and search and rescue. Her brief stint as a Navy vessel included duty along the eastern Atlantic before the resumption of regular Coast Guard duties at Milwaukee in 1920.

Five months after his enlistment, Isermann rose to the rank of first class seaman. His pay was a mere \$50 per month. By the time he was discharged in October 1919, after his second enlistment, he would make Signal Quartermaster, First Class. Along the way he would take part in the *Tuscarora*’s operations along the Gulf and East Coast that included tending the surrendered German Sub UB-88 as she toured US ports in the aftermath of the war.

Isermann’s logs and diaries provide a fascinating look into the evolution of his feelings about serving aboard the *Tuscarora*, particularly after the cessation of hostilities. His early entries are precise and detailed. You can sense his dedication and desire to serve, but by the time 1919 rolled around he was ready to go home. The war



Isermann’s collection includes the commissioning pennant from the USS *Tuscarora*, CG and a Royal Canadian sailor’s cap from the HMCS *Shearwater*.

was over, the Kaiser soundly defeated, but the *Tuscarora* remained at sea. Most of the original crew had been discharged and Isermann felt a bit lost. As early as May 1918 he had seen many of his close friends leave the *Tuscarora*, replaced by 25 members from the U. S. Coast Guard Academy. The Florida Keys and southern waters were brutally hot, especially for a Kenosha man. Peacetime operations that included such mundane activities like towing derelict vessels failed to inspire Isermann. He had joined to defeat Germany and that job was done. More importantly Isermann had run afoul of one of his superiors — a man he pejoratively identified in writing only as “The Red Head.” It’s not entirely clear how the “Red Head” became Isermann’s Captain Bligh, but whatever the cause the resultant feud had a profound effect on the Quartermaster’s last days in service. Isermann revealed his feelings on the fly page of his 1919 diary:

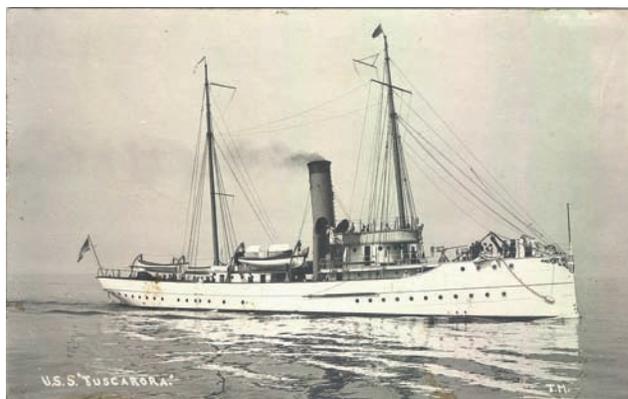
“If writing this log book I should fail  
 Things got too hot for me on this floating jail  
 For this ship is a madhouse and mad she’ll be  
 Till the “Red-Head’s” carcass is sunk in the sea.”

J.C.I



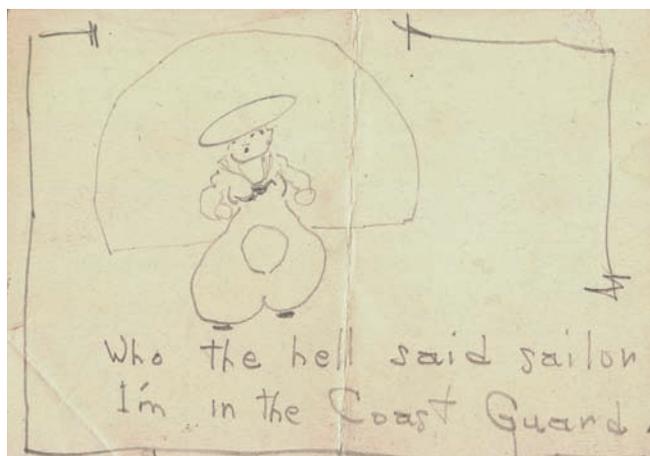
*Wearing foul weather gear, Isermann poses for this photo during a rough one.*

Isermann wasn’t a poet and he certainly wasn’t the first soldier, sailor, airman or marine to cultivate an intense dislike for a particular superior. Towards the end of his enlistment he joined the ranks of a long line of sailors who chafed under the yoke of perceived injustices. In any case, Isermann rendered good service to the Navy and he was well-liked among the crew of the *Tuscarora* as evidenced by the photographic documentation. His diary entries reveal a highly sociable individual who liked to dance, and go to movie theaters. Isermann managed to make friends in every port; particularly young ladies who would accompany him to Knights of Columbus dances and other social events. The devout Catholic also attended Mass as often as he could and made note in his diary when he went to confession.



*Resplendent in Coast Guard white, the *Tuscarora* would later be painted “war-color” gray in October 1917.*

Like many veterans, Isermann had some difficulty readjusting when he returned home. His wasn’t the typical problem of a combat veteran. He had never heard a shot fired in anger. Rather, he missed the excitement of travel and the thrill of visiting a new port. Disappointed with the familiarity of small-town Kenosha he wrote, “I want to get away from this town. Have enough of it already.” He spoke of returning to New York, one of his favorite ports of call. Small-town Kenosha held little of the excitement that Isermann had grown to love. His home town became attractive only after he met a young woman named Marie Ratigan. He was never the same again, and any thoughts of moving to New York instantly disappeared. “Saw Marie,” he wrote in November 1919, “That’s all that matters. That girl has cast a spell over me. She is continually in my thoughts. I Love Her.” Isermann went on to marry his beloved Marie in 1923. His son John Chester Isermann, Jr. carried on his father’s maritime legacy, serving as an Electrician’s Mate First Class, USN in World War II.



*Included in Isermann’s collection were a few small cartoons. This one bemoans the fate of a Coast Guardsman turned Navy “Sailor.” It’s not clear whether Isermann was the artist.*

## FOLLOW ISERMANN AT SEA!

Beginning January 1, 2012, you can follow Isermann’s story on our website and our Facebook page. Visit [www.wisvetsmuseum.com](http://www.wisvetsmuseum.com) for more information.

**RUSS HORTON**  
REFERENCE ARCHIVIST



## MYSTERY SOLVED

THE STORY OF AN UNIDENTIFIED MAN

A pair of images in the WVM archives portray a mock Civil War recruitment scene. Taken by John S. Fuller, a well-known Madison photographer, the two cartes de visite show men gathered around a table with posters on the wall in the background, including one with the phrase “ENLIST VETERAN REGIMENT!” A closer look, though, reveals that these images were not meant to document this important activity, but are rather humorous staged pictures for entertainment.

So who are these gentlemen pictured in this pair of cartes de visite? Only one is actually identified. Above the head of one appears an inscription that reads “Col. Lovell.” A quick search of our database revealed only one Colonel from Wisconsin named Lovell – Frederick S. Lovell of Kenosha who served as Lieutenant Colonel of the 33rd Wisconsin Infantry and later as Colonel of the 46th Wisconsin Infantry Regiment. Could he be the man in the image?

A search for existing photographs in our collection from which to compare our alleged Lovell turned up nothing. We knew that Lovell had received a commission as Colonel of the 46th Wisconsin, so our search turned to Kenosha, Lovell’s city of residence at the time of the Civil War. Jean Hoffman from the Kenosha Public Museum found an image of Frederick S. Lovell in a published history of the city. Did we have our man? The Kenosha photo had a slight resemblance to the man identified as Lovell in our pair of cartes



*A bit of archival work helped WVM archivist, Russ Horton and Collections Manager, Andrea Hoffman identify “Col. Lovell,” seated in the center in this photo (Mss 2010 67).*

de visite, but ultimately the beard and the eyes did not match our man. Our Lovell was heftier in build, had a much grayer beard and a pair of unmistakably deep brooding eyes.

A quick search of the Wisconsin Historical Society photographic database, and “Antietam on the Web, (an online database of all things Antietam-related), turned up two photographs that are dead ringers for our “Col. Lovell.” We had



*Lovell appears second from left while others look on in this implied action photo (Mss 2010.67).*

our man! As it turns out, our man is Charles S. Lovell, Lieutenant Colonel, 18th Infantry, U.S. Regulars. Additional information indicates that Lovell was appointed Assistant Provost Marshal General for Wisconsin in 1863 until he was promoted to Colonel of the 14th Infantry, February 16, 1865. It’s likely that these two photographs were taken while Lovell was on duty in Madison as Assistant Provost Marshal General, some time between 1863 and 1865.



*Charles S. Lovell (Courtesy of Wisconsin Historical Society, WHI-58524)*

A native of Massachusetts, Lovell enjoyed a long military career in the Regular Army, enlisting as a private of the 2nd United States Artillery in 1831. He quickly rose through the ranks, and by 1838 had achieved the rank of 1st Lieutenant. He saw action during the Mexican War at Churubusco, Molino del Rey, Chapultepec and Mexico City. At the outbreak of the Civil War he was promoted to Major and commanded a brigade during the Peninsula Campaign, and at Second Manassas, Antietam and Fredericksburg. After the war, Lovell commanded the 14th Regulars at Ft. Yuma, California before retiring from active service in December 1870.

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The mission of the Wisconsin Veterans Museum is to commemorate, acknowledge, and affirm the role of Wisconsin veterans in America's military past.



## THE BUGLE

*The Bugle* is published quarterly by the Wisconsin Veterans Museum Foundation for our members and friends. The Wisconsin Veterans Museum Foundation provides funds for the support of artifact acquisition, exhibit production and the development of educational programs.

## COMMENTS & SUBMISSIONS

We welcome your comments and editorial submissions concerning *The Bugle*. Comments and submissions should be sent to Jennifer Carlson at [Jennifer.Carlson@dva.state.wi.us](mailto:Jennifer.Carlson@dva.state.wi.us).

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