

# THE BUGLE

VOLUME 22:4  
WINTER 2016

QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF THE WISCONSIN VETERANS MUSEUM



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SKI and TOBOGGAN SLIDE  
331<sup>ST</sup> M. G. B<sup>N</sup>  
CAMP GRANT - JAN. 25 1916

Image from the Charles R. Reuber  
collection, WVM Mss 1590



FROM THE SECRETARY  
THE GREAT WAR



Service members do not make our nation’s foreign policy—they deliver it, with boots on the ground and from high in the sky, with rifles and cannons, as well as with their presence, professionalism and empathy for those they help after the fight. This world has been shaped by our veterans and our veterans have been shaped by the places they have been and the things they have seen.

This past Veterans Day, we honored all of our veterans, with a special focus on the centennial of World War I. World War I began in 1914, bringing most of Europe into the war. In 1917, after years of standing by, the United States entered into the Great War.

Woodrow Wilson called on Americans to enlist in large numbers, including, of course, many Wisconsinites who served with great distinction. From Wisconsin, 122,215 served and 3,932 were casualties.

The end of the Great War came on November 11, 1918 – Armistice Day. It is the day we celebrate now as Veterans

Day. As veterans, we can all trace our lineage back to a starting point and World War I is no different. Wisconsinites served then as they do now and did before – carrying on the tradition of selfless service and passing it on to future generations. The last living American veteran of the war, a soldier named Frank Buckles, died in 2011 at the age of 110. While we no longer have living service members from World War I, we use days like Veterans Day to remember them. The Great War left the world with new nations that we still see today, as well as with the seeds to World War II, and other conflicts that continue to this day. The history of World War I is a solemn reminder of the cost of war, and while time marches on and older veterans pass away, their memories are kept alive.

John A. Scocos  
Secretary

## WISCONSIN VETERANS MUSEUM SPECIAL PROJECTS



Your membership supports the mission of the Wisconsin Veterans Museum.  
In 2016, we have a number of special projects you may be interested in supporting:

★ **ACQUISITIONS** ★

Help the Wisconsin Veterans Museum acquire significant objects and archival materials

★ **TRAVELING EXHIBITS** ★

Support a series of newly developed traveling exhibits that will increase the Wisconsin Veterans Museum presence throughout Wisconsin

★ **EDUCATION** ★

Advance developing educational initiatives at the Wisconsin Veterans Museum



REMEMBER, YOUR GIFT MAKES *YOUR* MUSEUM STRONGER!



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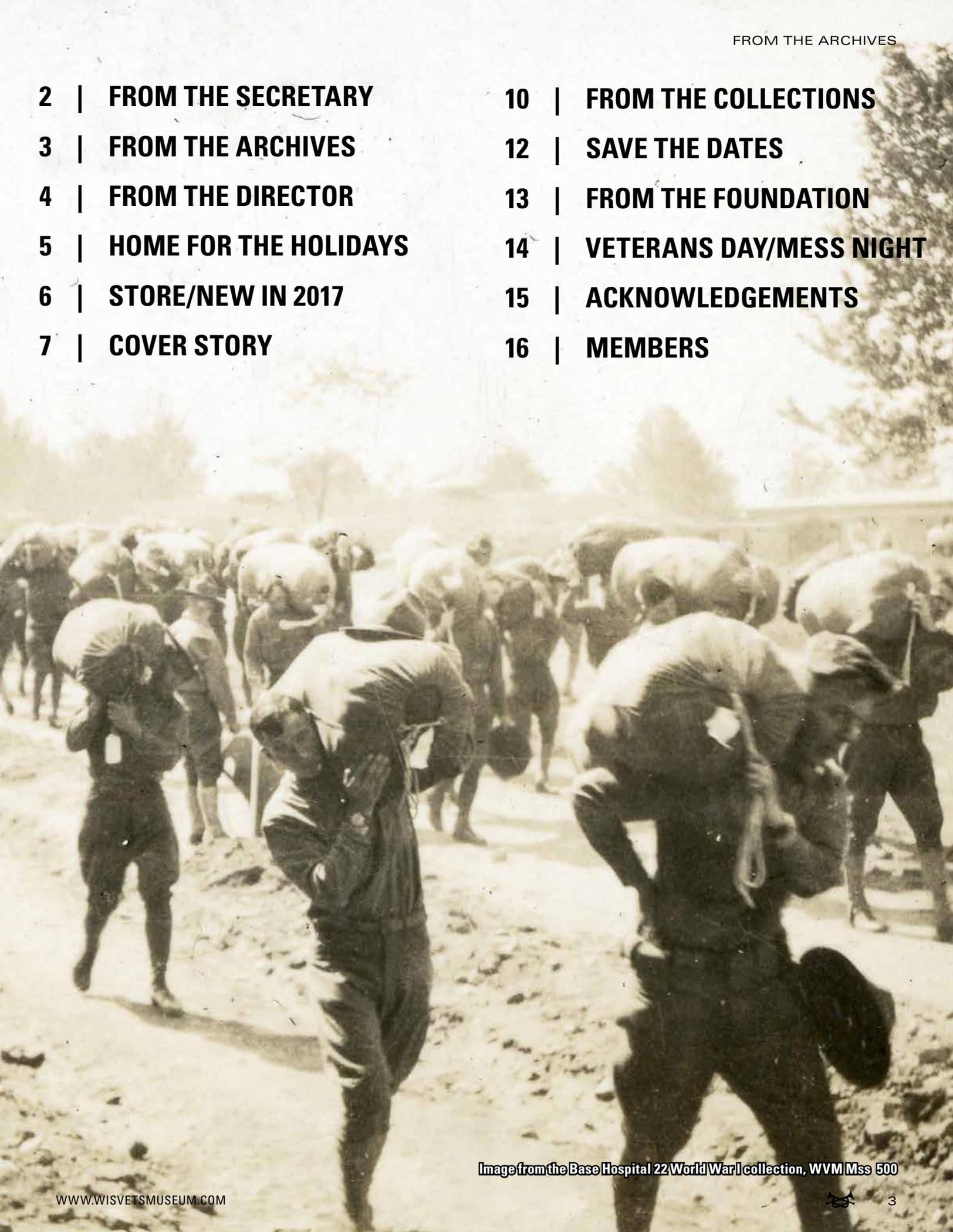


Image from the Base Hospital 22 World War I collection, WVM Mss 500





FROM THE DIRECTOR  
IN HONOR

**Hail and Farewell**

On November 9, 2016, John A. Scocos, Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs announced his impending retirement, effective January 2017. Under the leadership of Secretary Scocos, the Wisconsin Veterans Museum organized and participated in a number of large public events that honored veterans of nearly every national conflict.

Starting in May 2012 with Operation Greatest Generation in Green Bay and continuing through Return to Camp Randall in 2015, Secretary Scocos was at the forefront of publicly honoring Wisconsin's veterans. More importantly, the Secretary ensured that the Wisconsin Veterans Museum had the necessary resources to advance its mission of commemorating,

acknowledging, and affirming the role of Wisconsin's veterans in shaping history. The Secretary's love of veterans' history was manifest in his desire to see the Museum succeed in all facets of his operations. He personally helped usher in an Eagle scout program that exposed dozens of aspiring scouts to the valuable lessons of sacrifice, courage and fidelity that are so central to the veterans' experience.

In 2016, Secretary Scocos donated his entire personal collection representing more than 30 years of military service starting in the 1980s, including two combat tours in Iraq. This donation helps the Museum bridge the gap between the Cold War and the beginning of the so-called War on Terror, and represents a significant addition to the Museum's collection. Although Secretary Scocos will soon be leaving the WDVA, we are certain that he will continue to support the Museum and its endeavors with the same vigilance and intensity that he did while overseeing its parent agency. We wish him the best as he pursues other avenues and opportunities.

**Veterans Day 2016**

I'm often asked if we do anything special for Veterans Day at the Wisconsin Veterans Museum. My stock answer is usually, "Every day is Veterans Day at WVM." This year, however, the WVM staged two special events to mark the occasion. "Eagle and Friends" featured our national symbol, the bald eagle, with a discussion about

the importance of the bald eagle, and its relationship to veterans of the United States Armed Forces and Wisconsin.

In addition to meeting the bald eagle, Valkyrie (young female), a falcon and two owls were brought along for purposes of comparison. The hour-long program attracted more than 150 standing-room-only attendees. Preceding the raptor program, students from St. James School in Madison performed a musical program and presented veterans with thank you cards. The program began with a panel discussion that featured the students asking veterans about their experiences in military service. Programs like these are successful in attracting younger audiences, and ensure that students are exposed to the cherished ideals of this nation.

Finally, as always, thank you to all of our members for your continued support. Your contributions help us meet our mission, and provide valuable resources that augment our operating budget, including exhibit development support and special event activities. To all of our supporters – we wish you Happy Holidays and a Happy New Year.

Michael E. Telzrow  
Director



# WISCONSIN VETERANS MUSEUM

PRESENTS A WWII-ERA EXPERIENCE



HOME FOR THE

HOLIDAYS

FEATURED MC  
NORMAND GILLILAND  
WPR HOST



WITH MUSIC BY  
LADIES MUST SWING  
BIG BAND

## 1940s USO-STYLE HOLIDAY DANCE

### SATURDAY ★ DECEMBER 10TH ★ 8 - 11 PM

### THE UNIVERSITY CLUB \* 803 STATE STREET \* MADISON, WI



**1940s  
ATTIRE**  
*Encouraged!*



*Cocktails*  
&  
*Hors d'Oeuvres*



*Beginner Swing  
Lessons at 7 PM*

**\$50** Student with ID  
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\* Registration Required \*

FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO REGISTER CALL: 608.264.7663 OR VISIT: [WISVETSMUSEUM.COM/EVENTS](http://WISVETSMUSEUM.COM/EVENTS)



# WINTER SALE



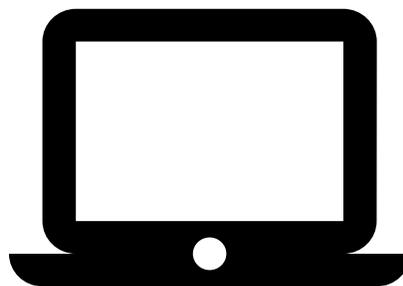
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# ENTERTAINING TROOPS IN WORLD WAR II



**RUSS HORTON**  
REFERENCE ARCHIVIST



**“You have to understand that at this time, the fighting was extremely difficult with no chance for relaxing, eating any kind of warm cooked meal, and any escape from fear or death. So when any unit was pulled back from the front lines for a couple of days rest, their officers were looking for anything to make the guys laugh, even if it was only for a ½ hour or so.”**

-Milton Sklansky, Letter to his grandchildren, 1994



**N**ext month, the Wisconsin Veterans Museum will recreate the atmosphere of a World War II USO (United Service Organizations) Dance at “Home for the Holidays.” (You can find out more about the fun event in this issue on Page 5!) While the attire, music, and dances you experience there will be just like those from the 1940s, the true meaning and purpose of a USO event from that era cannot be duplicated as easily. The story of a Racine veteran named Milton Sklansky, however, provides incredible context to help us understand the vital importance of entertainment to soldiers and sailors fighting in World War II.

Born in Chicago in 1922, Sklansky dreamed of being an entertainer. He was taking acting classes at Goodman Theatre when he enlisted in the Army in 1942. Assigned to the 16th Evacuation Hospital as a stretcher bearer, Sklansky was training at Camp Blanding, Florida when Al Williams, a fellow soldier, approached him with a unique opportunity. An officer wanted Williams to start a three man act to entertain the troops. Williams knew of Sklansky’s talents, so along with Sklansky’s friend Norman “Whitey” Schwartzberg, the three formed an act named the Three Goldbricks. They dressed up in Army boots, nurse skirts, and mop heads for long hair, and lip synced Andrews Sisters songs. They were an instant hit! When their unit deployed to North Africa, the Three Goldbricks continued to perform their act when not helping set up a hospital to treat wounded troops.



Page 7: *The Three Goldbricks*, Milton Sklansky WVM Mss 626

Page 8: *Top: The Three Goldbricks*, Milton Sklansky, WVM Mss 626

*Bottom right: The cast of Blythe Spirit*, Milton Sklansky, WVM Mss 626

*Bottom left: the Three Goldbricks*, Milton Sklansky, WVM Mss 626

**“What you can’t imagine would be the looks on these guys’ faces when the three of us being tired, hungry, lonesome, or whatever disappear as they broke out in laughter at the Sisters, these guys actually fell apart. When it was over the guys didn’t want to let us go weeks that they had a chance to relax and not be living in fear for a few hours. It really got officers of many units that we spent time with thanking**

But things really changed for Sklansky after the 16th Evacuation Hospital took part in the invasion of Italy in September 1943. With incredibly intense fighting occurring all around, the true value of entertainment became readily apparent. Sklansky described this revelation to his grandchildren in a letter he wrote more than fifty years afterward:

*“What you can’t imagine would be the looks on these guys’ faces when the three of us came out of a tent and they saw us for the first time. You could just see every feeling of being tired, hungry, lonesome, or whatever disappear as they broke out in laughter at the sight of us. When the record started, and we went into our act of “miming” the Andrews Sisters, these guys actually fell apart. When it was over the guys didn’t want to let us go. They wanted to give us their candy, cigarettes, beer or whatever. It was the first time in weeks that they had a chance to relax and not be living in fear for a few hours. It really gave the three of us a very warm feeling. Our officer showed us a bunch of letters from the officers of many units that we spent time with thanking him for sending us, and how much the guys loved it.”*

During the prolonged Battle of Monte Cassino, the Three Goldbricks were officially transferred from the 16th Evacuation Hospital to the 5th Army’s Special Services, a unit dedicated to arranging entertainment for the troops. The very existence of such a unit shows that the Army understood the importance of morale and providing soldiers with some form of escape. The Three Goldbricks continued to perform their act, but it was often opening up for bigger stars, like comedian Joe E. Brown, during a two week tour of Italy. They also had the surreal experience of performing onstage with the actual Andrews Sisters, who apparently were not very amused or flattered by the men’s impersonation of them. Sklansky also helped organize the “Spaghetti Bowl,” a huge football game played in Florence between members of the 5th Army and men from the 12th Air Force. After Allied forces took Rome, Special Services set up there and Sklansky’s duties grew to include booking USO shows.

The USO formed in 1941 when the Salvation Army, YMCA, YWCA, and three other organizations came together for the purpose of providing entertainment and recreation to service people. While this initially took the form of clubs in which dances took place and movies were shown for troops training stateside, it soon expanded into overseas clubs and shows with famous entertainers travelling to theaters of war to perform for the troops. Sklansky’s new duties with Special Services entailed working closely with the USO to arrange these shows in Italy.

As Sklansky had discovered, the importance of the USO shows was not necessarily the name of the celebrity performing, but the mere opportunity for them to forget the war for a time. He provided a snapshot of this work in a May 17, 1944 letter to his sister, Annette: “Right now things are kind of slow. We only have two USO shows for the whole Fifth Army - and one of them is leaving before their schedule is up - so the only one left is the [Marlene] Dietrich show, and I’ve already got her booked up solid. I haven’t seen her show yet, but I’ve talked to several guys that have, and they say it is terrific. Right now, it’s hard to get the entertainment to the guys who need it. You see, most of the men are really working now, and don’t have time to see shows, but we’re trying to work it out the best we can.”

Sklansky remained in Europe for the remainder of the war. Upon returning home, he married his sweetheart Beverly and settled in Racine, where they raised two children. In the early 1990s, he wrote a series of letters to his grandchildren describing some of his experiences in the Army. While he touched upon a wide variety of events - including meeting Humphrey Bogart - the experience he described most vividly revolved around the way soldiers appreciated the Three Goldbricks’ act. He went into detail about the looks on their faces, their laughter, and their gratitude. After fifty years, the importance of providing soldiers fighting a vicious war with laughter and reminders of better times burned the most bright in his memory. His letters and photographs, preserved at the Wisconsin Veterans Museum will help future generations understand this as well.

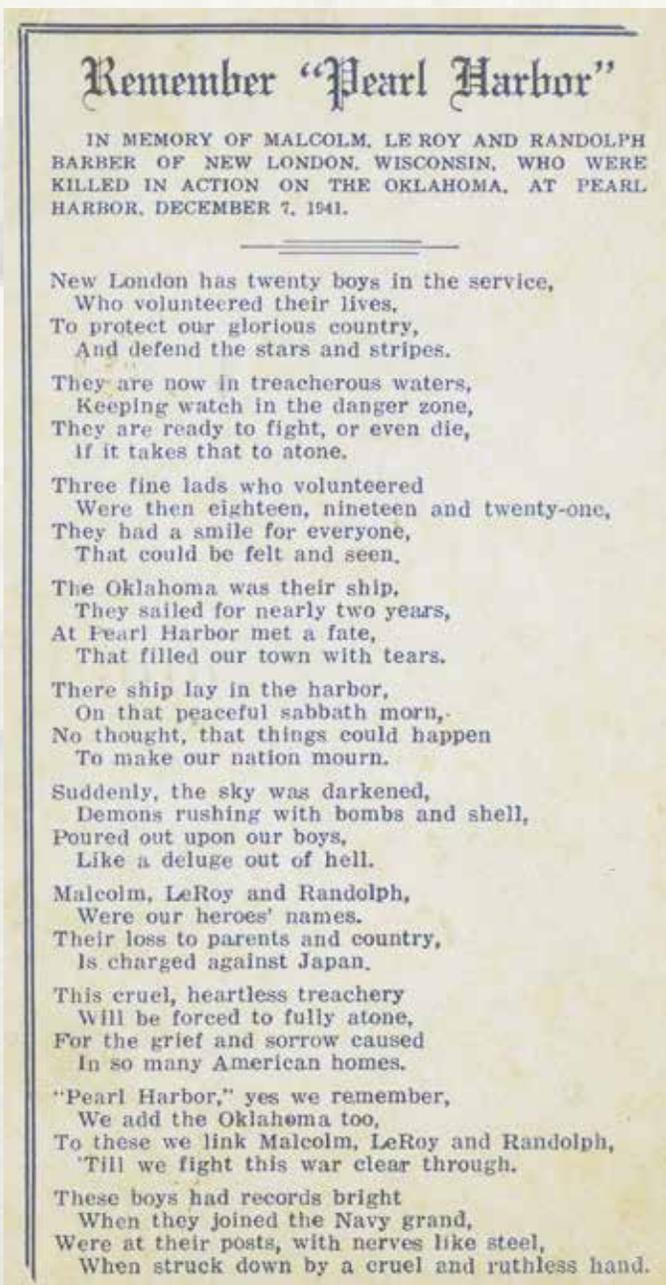
**came out of a tent and they saw us for the first time. You could just see every feeling of sight of us. When the record started, and we went into our act of “miming” the Andrews . They wanted to give us their candy, cigarettes, beer or whatever. It was the first time in ave the three of us a very warm feeling. Our officer showed us a bunch of letters from the g him for sending us, and how much the guys loved it.”**

**ANDREA HOFFMAN**  
COLLECTIONS MANAGER



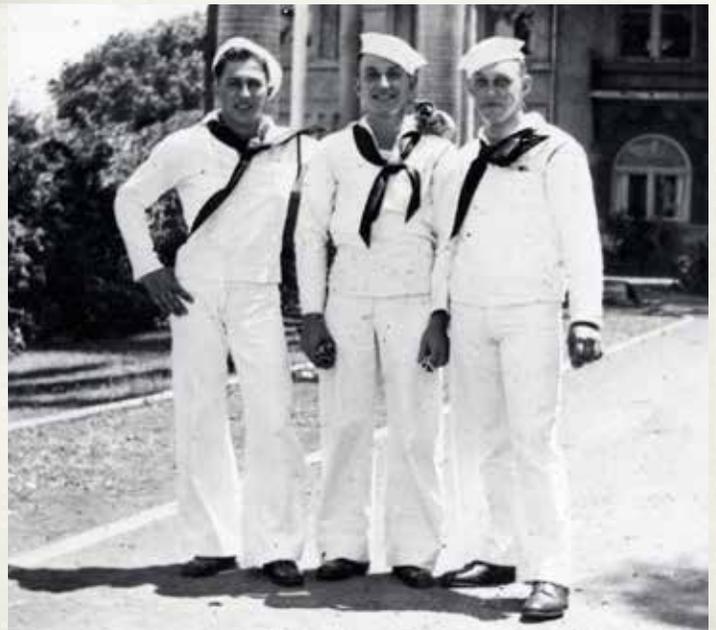
# REMEMBER

**Certain pivotal events in our nation's history have remained "where were you when" moments for all who lived through them, with one of the most prominent being the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor 75 years ago this December. While most of our World War II veterans' stories began after the call to "Remember Pearl Harbor," these are a few of the Wisconsin Veterans Museum collections of those already serving their country in Hawaii on that fateful day, witness to the infamy firsthand.**



*The Barber Brothers poem, Mss2012.082.*

**THE BARBER BROTHERS** of New London, Wisconsin all enlisted in the United States Navy in 1940, 22-year-old Malcom and 19-year old Randolph following their 20-year-old brother LeRoy's lead after he wrote from Great Lakes Naval Training Station to persuade them to join. In a break with Navy protocol, all three, now firemen, were assigned together to the USS Oklahoma. The Barbers were delighted they could stick together, but a couple of weeks before the attack, their father wrote the Navy asking that they be reassigned to separate ships. Tragically, the unthinkable still happened. All three brothers were trapped together when the Oklahoma capsized, their bodies never recovered. Two years later, the USS Barber, a Buckley-class destroyer escort, was named in their honor.



*The Barber Brothers, Mss2012.082.*

# “Pearl Harbor”

## 75 YEARS LATER



Arthur G. Rortvedt, Mss2003.003

**ARTHUR G. “ART” RORTVEDT** of DeForest, Wisconsin registered for the draft in March of 1940, but, preferring not to go into the Army, enlisted in the Army Air Corps instead. He completed his basic training at Wheeler Army Airfield, and was assigned to the 58th Bomb Squadron at Hickam Field one month before the attack. Rortvedt later credited his survival that morning to choosing not to eat breakfast in the mess hall, the location of many of Wheeler’s casualties. During a WVM oral history interview done in 1999, Rortvedt stated “We heard the explosions and thought it was our Navy training, then we saw the Japanese aircraft...We got organized and I was on a .50 caliber machine gun and I was firing at the aircraft in the second wave. There was confusion; we could see the third wave that was bombing at a higher altitude. Some of our aircraft took off, but they did not find the Japanese ships.” Rortvedt spent the remainder of the war on Kanton Island and Makin Island working as an aircraft mechanic. He later re-enlisted and served in the Air Force until 1950.

**LEROY E. CHURCH** of Lodi worked as an automobile mechanic for the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) enlisting in the United States Army Air Corps on November 18, 1940. Church arrived in Hawaii within a month of joining, and served first with the 23rd Material Squadron before reassigned to the 22nd Material Squadron a year later. He was with the Base Engineering Department at Hickam Field when the assault began, his barracks struck within the first few minutes of the attack. At the age of 25, Pvt. Church was one of 29 men in his squadron who lost their lives that day.



Above: Dog tag, Purple Heart and souvenir patch, LeRoy E. Church, V2006.81.13-15.

Left: LeRoy E. Church, Church family collection, WVM Mss 2089



**RHODA ANN ZIESLER** of Manitowoc, Wisconsin joined the United States Army Nurse Corps in 1940. Just weeks before the fateful day she was transferred from her training grounds at Camp Custer, Michigan to the 215th General Hospital located at Schofield Barracks in central Oahu, and was appointed head nurse of a 112 bed ward. While Schofield Barracks was not a primary target that morning, nearby Wheeler Army Airfield was. She later recounted her experience on an application for the Pearl Harbor Survivors Association, writing “On the morning of the attack, I and several other nurses were on duty and stepped outdoors to see what was happening. The Japanese planes were flying so low. We could see the rising sun [on the planes]. Ziesler remained at Schofield Barracks for the duration of the war, and afterwards married Robert Weller, a soldier and fellow Wisconsinite whom she had met while stationed in Hawaii.

Lieutenant Rhoda Ziesler returning home in Hawaii from the Schofield Barracks hospital, December 9, 1941 after the December 7, 1941 attack. Rhoda Ziesler collection, WVM Mss 1914

# SAVE THE DATES

**JAN 26**  
THURSDAY

## *MESS NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM: OUR BOYS IN FRANCE*

5:30 PM-8:00 PM

Travel back to 1918 with WVM Reference Archivist Russ Horton as he presents OUR BOYS IN FRANCE. Featured materials include: original scripts, slides, and supporting propaganda distributed by the U.S. government's Committee on Public Information.

**APRIL**  
2017

## *BEYOND THE TRENCHES*

VIP Exhibit opening

Join us for the members-only opening of BEYOND THE TRENCHES an exhibit commemorating the stories of Wisconsin's veterans in World War I. More information in the next edition of the Bugle.

**APRIL 27**  
THURSDAY

## *MESS NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM: MILWAUKEE'S WWII COMBAT CORRESPONDENTS*

Presented by Meg Jones, Journalist

5:30 PM - 8:00 PM

Join journalist MEG JONES as she shares stories about photographer Dickey Chapelle, radio journalist H.V. Kaltenborn, and Associated Press Berlin office chief Louis Lochner.

**MAY 11**  
THURSDAY

## *COCKTAILS WITH A CURATOR (NEW PROGRAM!)*

5:30 PM - 7:00 PM

This year's new program is COCKTAILS WITH A CURATOR, a happy-hour event series (yes, with drinks!). Join this intimate discussion with a curator as they show you behind the scene collection pieces not currently on display. | Happy Hour-5:30 PM | Presentation-6PM | Q&A-6:30 PM | Free Admission | Cash Bar

PROGRAM LOCATION IS THE WISCONSIN VETERANS MUSEUM, UNLESS OTHERWISE SPECIFIED

FOR DETAILED EVENT INFORMATION VISIT:

[WWW.WISVETSMUSEUM.COM/EVENTS](http://WWW.WISVETSMUSEUM.COM/EVENTS)

# LOUGH LUNCHEON LECTURE

Thank you to all of those who attended the Foundation's latest event, the *Lough Luncheon Lecture* at Rare Steakhouse. David Lough gave an engaging lecture based on his book *No More Champagne: Churchill and His Money*, while attendees enjoyed a mouth-watering lunch provided by Rare.

Thanks to you, we were able to raise over \$4,000 in support of the Wisconsin Veterans Museum. Thank you for making it a success!

We hope to see you at the Museum's next event, HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS, a 1940s USO-style holiday dance on December 10th.



**LIZ ORELLA**  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



**EILEEN NEWCOMER**  
MEMBERSHIP & ANNUAL GIFTS  
DIRECTOR

## WE GIVE IN HONOR...

In the fall, we introduced a new section to the Bugle called In Honor. We're happy to present a section that features the names of those individuals you have given in honor or in memory of. We know every veteran is a story, and we want to help you recognize the veterans in your life. Through your donation to In Honor, you ensure that your loved one will be recognized for their contribution. Their name will become part of an archive that others will see now and in the future. Your donation to In Honor is a personal salute to a veteran that also supports the stories of many veterans. This is a very personal reason for giving, and the Foundation is proud to be able to make your personal memorial a part of the larger Wisconsin Veterans Museum's mission to commemorate, acknowledge, and affirm the role of Wisconsin citizens in American military history, past and present.

Your support provides so many wonderful programs and exhibits that tell the stories of Wisconsin veterans and their place in America's military history. Exhibits like the upcoming *Beyond the Trenches*, which will follow the stories of Wisconsin servicemembers from recruitment to their homecoming, allow visitors to engage with our veterans' stories and create a deeper understanding of Wisconsin veterans and their experiences. You give to support this important work.

Your support also allows the WVM to share our veterans' stories beyond the four walls of the Museum. The Bugle allows you and other readers to experience their stories in the comfort of your homes. The articles spark curiosity and a new appreciation for our military history, and for the work of our talented staff. You make all of this possible. Thank you!

FOUNDATION STAFF MEMBERS, LIZ, EILEEN, AND MARY ENCOURAGE YOU TO CALL AND EMAIL WITH YOUR COMMENTS, QUESTIONS, DONATIONS, MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS, ADDRESS UPDATES, ETC. PLEASE CONTACT THE FOUNDATION OFFICE AT (608) 261-0536 OR EMAIL US AT [MEMBERSHIP@WVMFOUNDATION.COM](mailto:MEMBERSHIP@WVMFOUNDATION.COM).

## IN HONOR

A most sincere thank you to all who made a gift in honor or in memory of a veteran in your life from August 2016 through November 2016. Thank you for your generosity and support of the Wisconsin Veterans Museum.

### BOLDED NAME: HONOREE

**AZEVEDA, MATTHEW**

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**CLARK, HOMER, LT.**

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**ELVER, RICHARD**

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KLEM, BRUCE

**KOREAN VETS**

KWVA SE WISCONSIN CHAPTER 227

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**OLESON, KARELIUS**

OLSON, JOHN

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**SCHNEIDER, PETER, SGT.**

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**SHESKI, TOM**

SHESKI, JOHN

**VESER, ED**

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## MESS NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM:

### OUR BOYS IN FRANCE

Thursday, January 26th, 2017 • 5:30 PM - 8:00 PM

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www.wisvetsmuseum.com

## MUSEUM HOURS

Closed Mondays  
Tuesday-Saturday 9:00 AM-4:30 PM  
Sunday (April-September) Noon-4:00 PM

## RESEARCH CENTER HOURS

Monday by appointment only  
Tuesday-Friday 9:00 AM-3:30 PM

## MUSEUM MISSION

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 through the support of 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 Karen Burch at Karen.Burch@dva.wisconsin.gov.

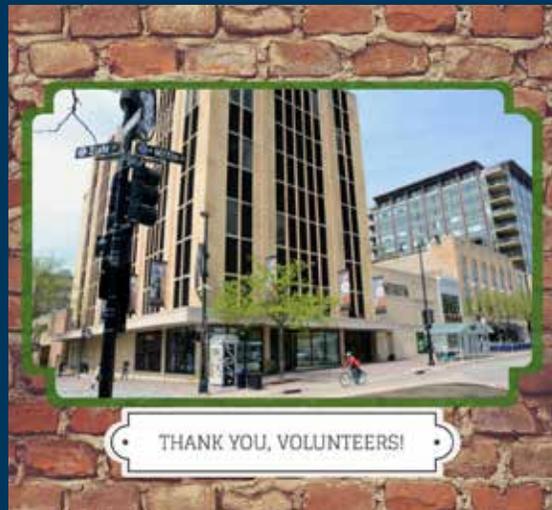
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## THANK YOU COLLECTION DONORS!

A most sincere thank you to all who donated to our collections from September through October 2016.  
Thank you for your generosity and support of the Wisconsin Veterans Museum.

SCOCOS, JOHN A.  
SIMAK, ELLEN  
STONEBURNER, ELIZABETH  
WILLIAMS, DIANE  
WOODSTOCK POLICE DEPARTMENT

## THANK YOU MEMBERS!

A most sincere thank you to all who purchased a membership from September 2016 to November 2016.  
We cannot provide quality programming and award-winning exhibits without your help.

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KIND, ARN  
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