



ALLIES

Newsletter for Members and Friends



The Great Flu Pandemic of World War I: 'Over Here' and 'Over There'

By CDR David Thompson
CHC, USNR (Ret.)

David Thompson is a retired Navy Chaplain living in Rosemount, MN. He is a member of the Military Officers Association (MOAA) and Military Chaplains Association (MCA) and the author of five books and numerous magazine and journal articles on historical and veterans' issues.

In my retirement, I was working on my family history and came across my dad's Army discharge papers from World War I. I recalled a "war story" he told me that's worth retelling as we commemorate the U.S. World War I centennial in Minnesota.

The story starts when I was a boy. My friends were bragging about the heroics of their fathers in the Second World War. It caused me to inquire of my dad, who was from Paynesville, Minnesota, and who fought in the First World War. "What did you do in World War I?" I asked. All he said was, "I survived the flu." I thought it was not

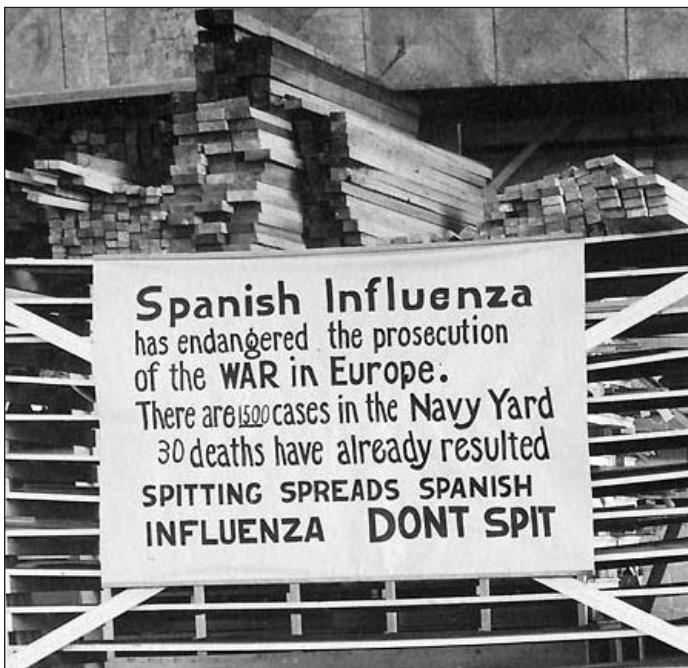


American Red Cross volunteers assemble flu masks in 1918 for soldiers while wearing them themselves. Many military installations required their use during the height of the outbreak. (National Archives)

much of a war story to tell my boyhood friends.

Later, when I was an adolescent, he told me the rest of the story: of being caught in a terrible battle with disease in World War I that infected 25 percent of the U.S. Army (1,125,401 out of 4,128,479) in the fall of 1918.

My dad was stationed at Camp Dodge, Iowa, in September 1918 when the influenza pandemic struck, infecting 10,008 soldiers in the camp of 33,070 and killing 702. He was put on a detail to prepare bodies for shipment home by rail, recalling hundreds of wooden coffins stacked awaiting train transportation. In the process, he got this respiratory flu himself, but he recovered to be



Sign at the naval aircraft factory in Philadelphia, October 1918. (Naval History and Heritage Command)



Crowded sleeping arrangements with "sneeze screens" in the Naval Training Station drill hall, San Francisco, late 1918. (Naval History and Heritage Command)

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discharged and sent home on Christmas Eve 1918. The Armistice had been signed the previous month, ending the war.

This story intrigued me, causing me to dig into World War I records and after action reports of the Army and Navy Medical Departments, searching for more details about this influenza pandemic that infected one out of four members of the armed forces and killed more troops than combat. In addition, it infected a similar percentage of civilian Americans on the home front—25.6 million out of a U.S. population of 105 million in 1918. The flu killed 675,000 Americans in a few short months of 1918 and early 1919. An estimated 50 million died worldwide. If all the victims of the Great Flu Pandemic of 1918 were buried in one place, the cemetery would cover 62 square miles.

This pandemic was the greatest disaster to befall America since its founding, simply dwarfing the numbers of all the disasters we commemorate today, like the 9/11 terrorist attack, the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the San Francisco earthquake or the Great Chicago fire.

Many a family history of a World War I veteran tells of a loved one who died in bed from the flu rather than in battle. They were shipped home and quietly buried in community cemeteries with only immediate family allowed to witness the burial, usually without military honors, due to flu quarantine measures. Sadly, these veterans were quickly forgotten, except by their families, as though air-brushed out of pictures and stories of the war.

When it became evident this was not an ordinary strain of flu, wartime censors on both sides downplayed its military impact, but newspaper accounts freely told how deadly the illness was in neutral Spain, which led to the false impression that Spain was the source. Thus, the pandemic acquired the nickname “Spanish Influenza.” In fact, the outbreak first appeared at Fort Riley, Kansas.

Treatment was virtually nonexistent and the numbers are grim. My research took me to an August 1, 1919 report by Col. Leonard P. Ayres (Chief Statistician of the U.S. Army during WW I) to Secretary of War Newton Baker. Ayres’s report tells the costly story:

Of 115,660 total war dead, 57,460 (50%) were due to disease and 50,280 (43%) were due to battle. Accidents, suicide, etc. listed as “other” accounted for 7,920 or 7%. Of all war-related deaths, 36,050 (31%) were in the Continental United States (CONUS) and 79,610 (69%) with the American Expeditionary Force (AEF) overseas, but of those who died of disease, 60% died in CONUS and 40% with the AEF. More than 80% of the deaths due to disease were from the flu pandemic.

The 1919 statistics used by Ayres were revised upward in 1923 to 116,497, due to subsequent deaths from wounds following the war. Likewise, the number who died from disease was increased from 57,460 to 58,119.

Pneumonia and influenza went hand-in-hand and were

often mixed together in the statistics cited: Influenza hit first and, if it did not outright kill you in a day or two, a bacterial pneumonia would develop that would kill you weeks later. Pneumonia was the end stage result of an influenza virus attack. Victims bled out of ruptured lungs and drowned in their own fluids, turning blue from lack of oxygen. It was a terrible way to die.

Dr. Carol Byerly, who served as the Assistant Historian for the U.S. Army Medical Command, writes: “On both sides of the Atlantic, the Army lost a staggering 8,743,102 days to influenza among enlisted men in 1918. . . . The war fostered disease by creating conditions in the trenches of France that some epidemiologists believe enabled the influenza virus to evolve into a killer of global proportions. In turn, disease shaped the war effort by rendering much of the Army and Navy non-effective and diverting resources, personnel, and scarce human attention and energy from the military campaign. The exigencies of war also thwarted many of the efforts such as crowd mitigation and quarantines to control the epidemic. The influenza epidemic in the U.S. military therefore provides a cautionary tale about the power of war to change the health environment and the power of disease to influence the conduct of war. During the AEF campaign at Meuse-Argonne, the epidemic diverted urgently needed resources from combat support to transporting and caring for the sick and the dead.”

A journal article by Peter Wever and Leo van Bergen describes how the influenza came in waves of varying lethality. The first wave in the spring of 1918 was relatively mild, causing few deaths. It was the second wave in the fall of 1918 that was the most virulent and caused tens of millions to die. A third wave in early 1919 was less severe, but still lethal. An often overlooked fourth wave in early 1920 also took its toll.

The U.S. Navy reported 121,225 cases of the flu in a Navy of 530,338 sailors, with 4,158 sea service personnel killed by the flu in 1918 on ships and CONUS bases.

Caregivers were also affected. As the war was drawing to a close in Europe, doctors and nurses on both sides of the Atlantic were being overwhelmed by the numbers of influenza patients. Navy nurse Josie Brown, who served at the hospital at Great Lakes Naval Training Center in Illinois at the height of the epidemic in 1918, later described what happened there and in many hospitals around the country: “The morgues were packed almost to the ceiling. . . .The morticians worked day and night. You could never turn around without seeing a big red truck loaded with caskets for the train station so bodies could be sent home. . . .[As for the living,] we didn’t have the time to treat them. We didn’t take temperatures; we didn’t even have time to take blood pressure.”

While tending to sick servicemen in the last three months of the war, 296 Army, Navy and American Red Cross (ARC) nurses died due to the influenza virus and

end stage bacterial pneumonia. Many of these nurses were decorated for bravery fighting this battle with disease. The Navy awarded the Navy Cross to three Navy nurses. The Army awarded the Distinguished Service Cross to three Army nurses and the Distinguished Service Medal to 25 Army nurses for their work with flu patients. France bestowed the Croix de Guerre on 28 members of the Army Nurse Corps and Great Britain acknowledged 69 American Army nurses with the British Royal Red Cross and gave two nurses the British Military Medal for actions during the 1918 epidemic. The French gave many American nurses the Medaille d'Honneur des Epidemies (Medal of Honor for Epidemics).

Three Army nurses from Minnesota lost their lives to the flu in France while caring for flu-stricken AEF soldiers: Esther Amundsen of South Montevideo; Lydia V. Whiteside of Duluth; and Nora Emelie Anderson of St. Hilaire, Minnesota.

On the Home Front, the 1918 flu pandemic ravaged our country in the fall of 1918, killing many family members of AEF soldiers in Europe and CONUS based servicemen on U.S. military bases and on ships at sea. After their discharge, many veterans returned home to grief-stricken families missing mothers, fathers, siblings, grandparents; or they suffered the loss of a spouse or children to this flu pandemic, while surviving the war themselves.

Mass casualty deaths in American cities were stunning: New York City—31,960; Philadelphia—15,556; and Chicago—13,176. The number of U.S. civilians who died on the Home Front due to the pandemic of 1918 was thirteen times larger than the number of American soldiers killed in combat in WW I.

In Minnesota, the first recorded case of the flu was in Wabasha, on September 2, 1918. Soon, in an effort to prevent the spread of the epidemic, the University of Minnesota was shut down, as well as many churches, dance halls, pool halls, theatres and public schools.

Every military base and military hospital in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area was severely affected. Case isolation was slowly implemented at both Fort Snelling and the Dunwoody Naval Hospital Detachment in Minneapolis. On September 30, the first day of isolation, cases numbered in the hundreds.

A report issued in 2007 about the pandemic in Minneapolis and St. Paul tells a chilling story: "The number of influenza patients that needed the attention of physicians and nurses overwhelmed St. Paul and Minneapolis clinicians. The war's considerable drain on the medical profession was compounded by other factors that hindered nurse and physician mobilization. Methods to keep them healthy while caring for influenza patients were ineffective. Many health-care providers fell ill, and some died. At one point, Minneapolis's City Hospital reported that nearly half of the nursing staff has been ill with influenza in the last three weeks."

In the end, from September 30, 1918 to January 6,

1919, 18,810 cases of influenza were reported in Minneapolis and St. Paul, resulting in 1,392 deaths. Statewide, 7,521 Minnesotan civilians died of the flu pandemic in the fall of 1918.

Minnesota had 118,497 servicemen in World War I. Of these, 3,607 died of all causes. Of the 3,607, nearly 40 percent (1,432) were killed in action or died of wounds (1,319 Army, 8 Navy, 105 USMC) and 60% (2,175) died of disease (2,024 Army, 137 Navy, and 14 USMC), mostly from the 1918 Flu Pandemic and its complications. In other words, most of Minnesota's war dead died of the flu "over here" in the United States and never even got "over there."

Those of us who are children and grandchildren of the 4.7 million World War I veterans, and 118,497 Minnesota World War I veterans, will soon be gone. With our passing, this rarely told "other war story" of the battle with disease in World War I may fade from memory, leaving only the stories of that conflict's military battles and strategies. But we need to tell this other war story too. It is a big part of what happened only a few generations ago; it needs to be acknowledged, lest it be forgotten completely by the next generation.

May we, during the World War I centennial, remember and honor all who served and all who died—from combat, combat wounds, disease and accidents—while serving "over here" as well as "over there" in The Great War.

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In a story entitled "A Winding Sheet and a Wooden Box" by the Navy History and Heritage Command tells about a Navy nurse who served at Naval Training Center Great Lakes, IL in the fall of 1918. <https://www.history.navy.mil/research/library/online-reading-room/title-list-alphabetically/i/influenza/a-winding-sheet-and-a-wooden-box.html>

The over-all Navy story of this battle with the pandemic is described here.
<https://www.history.navy.mil/research/library/online-reading-room/title-list-alphabetically/i/influenza/influenza-of-1918-spanish-flu-and-the-us-Navy.html>

Navy casualties due to the Great Flu Pandemic in WW I are listed by name on the Navy World War I casualty lists, from September-December 1918.

<http://www.naval-history.net/WW1NavyUS-CasualtiesChrono1918-09Sep1.htm>

France's unique "Medal of Honor for Epidemics" for service fighting the flu.

<http://themedalhound.com/frenchmoh/>

This U.S. Army Surgeon General's report speaks about the impact of the epidemic upon the Army: "Excerpts on the Influenza and Pneumonia Pandemic of 1918 from War Department Annual Report to the Secretary of War, Fiscal Year ending June 30, 1919," *Report of the Surgeon General, U.S. Army*. Reprinted online.

<http://history.amedd.Army.mil/booksdocs/wwi/1918flu/ARSG1919/ARSG1919Intro.htm>

Here is a listing of reports of all U.S. Army camps in the US when influenza struck on the home front in the fall of 1918:

<http://history.amedd.Army.mil/booksdocs/wwi/1918flu/ARSG1919/ARSG1919Extractsflu.htm>

Short Videos

A short clip entitled "*The Flu Epidemic Over Here: The Home Front During World War I.*"

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5JenIFm4kA0>

The PBS program, "*Killer Flu Documentary*," produced in 2013. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nT9ct-pQNXRE>

"*Turning Points of History: Kiss of the Spanish Lady.*"
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IsMHPYow7mY&list=PLy64FICyQsC26IYC5onEKBZ8OxZlbUAjU&index=155>

Volunteer Voices: Meet Gary Irwin

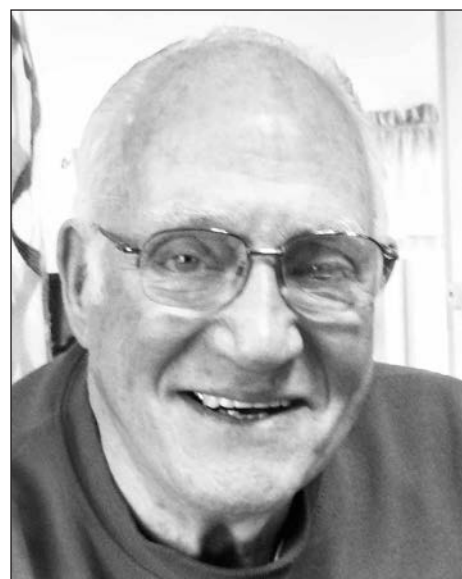
Volunteers are indispensable to the museum's work. In their own words, here's how they are making good things happen at the Minnesota Military Museum.

Gary, who lives "on some acreage" just north of Little Falls, has volunteered at the museum for about a year. He is a retired high school science teacher (Jeff Thielen took biology from him at Little Falls High School).

On getting involved: "Jeff kept asking me if I would like to volunteer. I had some time for things, so finally I agreed."

Museum projects: "I volunteered for the library and they put me to work cleaning up books, stamping them, and alphabetizing. I was working half a day on Tuesday and I asked if I could come in another day because I just loved it. I ended up coming in on Mondays and Tuesdays."

What he liked most: "I liked it for the people I worked with. Wonderful people. And the books. I guess you could say I never saw a book I didn't like. It was just a treat to work there every day."



GARY IRWIN

CURATOR'S CORNER

By Doug Thompson



With spring rapidly approaching and our expanded hours of operation about to take effect on May 1st, this is an opportune time to tell you about some of the new things happening with exhibits and the collection.

Recently, in cooperation with the family of the late General John H. Vessey, we have gathered and brought to the museum a large collection of the

General's artifacts, photos, and paperwork from his time in the service. These were in addition to the sizeable collection of Vessey memorabilia that we already had. The now combined collection is of immense state and national importance, and we are honored to have it at the Minnesota Military Museum.

A new exhibit will soon be added to the permanent "America at War" area of the museum. "Global War on

Terror – Operations in Iraq and Afghanistan" is scheduled to open on Memorial Day 2017. It will feature photographs and artifacts from those long running conflicts, with emphasis on the role played by Minnesotans. Speaking of which, we seek stories, artifacts, and photographs from that post 9/11 time period. Do you have anything you'd like to share with us to help document this more recent era in our history? Please contact me and help us preserve YOUR history!

Another new exhibit is our Artillery Display Shed, which is located behind the 1965 NCO tin hut and next to our 1940s Latrine building. After many months of hard work by our dedicated volunteers, we have four new (old) restored artillery pieces to share with you.

The maintenance and paint shop at Camp Ripley is currently helping with the cosmetic restoration and repainting of several vehicles from our outdoor displays. Included is an ambulance, a truck, and our exceptionally rare M-4 "Jumbo" Sherman tank. The tank is having historically incorrect parts removed and correct ones added, and is also getting an accurate WWII paint scheme and markings. We are excited to see the great work they do, and to have those historic vehicles back in the museum in time for summer.

OUT OF THE ARCHIVES

By Ryan Welle



The archives has seen a flurry of activity over the past couple months. When I joined the team, my first task was to become acquainted with the collections and how they are organized.

After a few days of wandering through the shelves and looking into boxes, I developed an understanding of how the collections were arranged. There is always

more updating to do, and things continue to change, and I rearranged some of the shelves to designate areas for new accessions that come in, and space for different formats of materials. This has allowed me to continue the work of adding things to the computer catalog for the archives, so that they can be searched more effectively.

I have also been planning for other projects in the archives. I would like to open space for a dedicated reading room area, where researchers can view and use the collections while visiting the archives. Another thing that I have been working on is a project started by my predecessor. There are a number of films in the collection, and we got some of them digitized through a Minnesota Legacy grant, as well as a grant from the National Film Preservation Foundation. These films relate to the construction of Camp Ripley and some of the units stationed at Camp Ripley during the 1930s. We have also partnered with the Minnesota Digital Library on this project, and they have agreed to add the films to their collection and make them available online.

Finally, please remember that the archives accepts donations. We are always looking for more stories from veterans about their service and experiences. If you have anything that you would like to share and preserve in the archives, or tell your story through an oral history interview, please let us know.

DIRECTOR'S UPDATE

By Jeff Thielen



In the last issue of this newsletter I discussed staff changes that had taken place with the curator and archivist. In this newsletter I need to announce one additional staff change.

As of May 1, I will once again join the ranks of the retired and the Military Historical Society of Minnesota will be conducting a search for a new executive director.

It has been a very short six years and I have enjoyed every minute of my time

here. It has been fun to work on projects that are supportive of veterans and to assist the museum in educating the public about Minnesota's veterans and its military

history.

I really want to thank all of you as members of this organization for the passion you have for the museum and for the financial support you provide. I know I will miss meeting and talking with you and all the visitors who visit the museum the most.

I want to thank the staff for their dedication, support, and willingness to try new things and not be afraid of change.

I also want to give a big thank you to our great volunteers for the countless hours they donate as they make the goals of the museum their goals.

Lastly, I want to thank the Board of Directors of this organization for their support and for doing what boards do and allowing me to do what executive directors do and knowing the difference between our roles.

As a life member of this organization I look forward to following the new outreach efforts the Minnesota Military Museum has planned with exhibits, programs, and through its library and archives.

I wish you all the best and hope our paths are able to cross somewhere in the future.

A salute to the work of Director Jeff Thielen

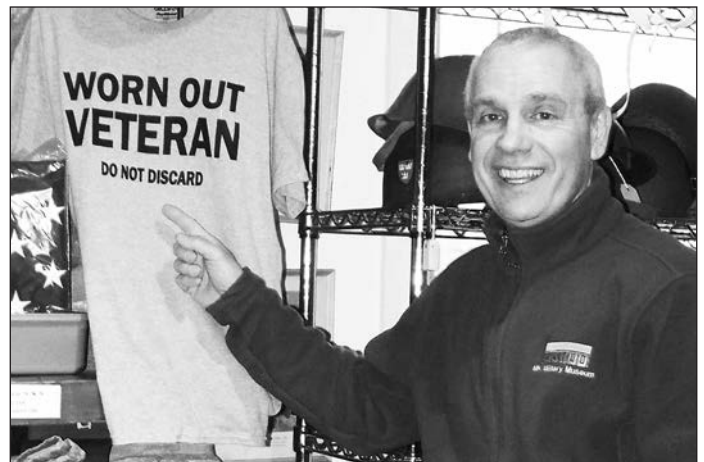
By Jack K. Johnson

This is a time of transition and change for the museum. In January we appointed a new archivist and a new curator. Now we bid farewell to Jeff Thielen, who will retire as executive director on May 1 after serving in that capacity for six years. In a sense, this will be Jeff's third retirement. The first two came after two concurrent careers in the Minnesota Army National Guard and the Enforcement Division of the Minnesota DNR, which is what Jeff did before he joined us as executive director.

Among the projects and changes implemented under Jeff's leadership are (1) a strong volunteer program; (2) various veteran initiatives, including the Veterans Registry and rotating Featured Veteran exhibits; (3) putting the archives on professional footing and hiring a full-time archivist; (4) putting the library on professional footing as well, and on track to become part of the statewide inter-library loan program; (5) a complete overhaul of artifact record keeping, which included converting old paper records to a computerized database; (6) enhanced outreach initiatives, such as the popular Traveling Trunk program to libraries and schools; (7) museum certification by the US Air Force, which makes it possible to acquire USAF aircraft for display ("Getting a C-130 is going to happen!" says Jeff); and (8) more vigorous fund-raising and grants-

manship.

Jeff had limited experience with museums when he was hired, but the Board was impressed with his energy, management skills, and goal orientation. They expected he would be a persuasive advocate for the museum and a good fund raiser—and the Board was right: Jeff's imprint on the museum has been profound. He leaves it stronger than ever. We wish him well in all his future endeavors. We thank him and we salute him for a job well done.



Executive Director Jeff Thielen will retire on May 1 after six years at the helm of the Minnesota Military Museum.

DONOR HONOR ROLL, January-March, 2017

Memorials

Given by:

Frank G. Dumbeck
Neill Carter
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194th Tank Regiment
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In Memory of:

Devin S. Alexander
August Joubert
Donald Hauck
Donald Hauck
Donald Hauck
Donald Hauck
James Guin
James Guin
James Guin
James Guin
James Guin
Frank G. Dumbeck
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Frank G. Dumbeck
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Leland P. Smith
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John Handeland

194th Tank Regiment Association in Memory of the following 61 soldiers of Co A, 194th Tank Bn, who served in World War II:

Ernest Miller	John Muir	Edward Burke
Clinton Quinlen	Arthur Root	Melvin Ahlmgrim
Lawrence Alberg	John Allen	Milan Anderson
Gerald Bell	August Bender	James Bogart
Alpheus Brown	Billie Brown	Ernest Brusseau
James Clevenger	Pearlie Clevenger	
Richard Davis	Maxwell Dobson	
John Falconer`	Harvey Finch	Raymond Fox
Arthur Gattie	Claude Gilmer	Wallace Goodrich
Ernest Gordon	Kenneth Gordon	
Carrol Guin	Ralph Hollingsworth	
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Carl Kramp	Warren Lackie	Joseph Lamkin
Howard Larson	Wallace Lee	Roy Maghan
Lee MacDonald	James McComas	
William Mattson	Roy Nordstrom	Glen Oliver
Donald Paine	Henry Peck	Kenneth Porwoll
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ALLIES is published for members and friends of the Military Society of Minnesota, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, and the Minnesota Military Museum. Donations are tax deductible. Go to mnmilitarymuseum.org on the Web for more information.

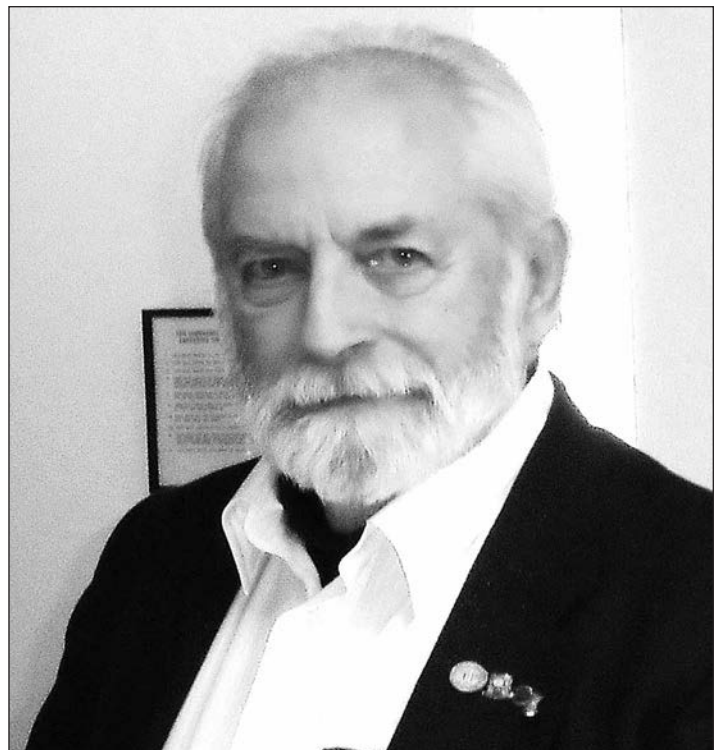
In Memorium: Leland Smith, board member and longtime archivist

Leland Smith of Blaine, 84, Korean War veteran and recipient of the Purple Heart, former Marine Corps staff sergeant, retired MDOT engineer, photographer and artist, ardent military history buff, and long-time friend and board member of the museum, passed away January 26 of cancer.

He served on the board of directors of the Military Historical Society of Minnesota for nearly 18 years (1995-2013) and was the museum's volunteer archivist from 1999-2013.

Lee was a walking encyclopedia of military knowledge and a serious collector of military history books and papers, uniforms, insignia and badges, and assorted militaria—nearly all of which he donated, over a period of years, to the Minnesota Military Museum. Although it was unfinished, his meticulously documented manuscript on the history of the Minnesota National Guard has long been a valuable resource for historians.

He was buried with full military honors at Fort Snelling National Cemetery on 1 February.



LELAND SMITH, 1933-2017