



ALLIES

Newsletter for Members and Friends of the Military Historical Society of Minnesota

Allies

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‘Mr. National Guard’ Part II

Ellard A. Walsh (1887-1975)

The Minnesota National Guard we know today owes much to this longest-serving AG

By Jack K. Johnson

Part I (Winter 2012 issue) highlighted events in the life of Major General Ellard Walsh (1887-1975) prior to World War Two. Walsh, Minnesota’s longest serving Adjutant General, also played a major role in shaping the National Guard as we know it today. Part II begins after Walsh stepped down as commanding general of the 34th Infantry Division.

Walsh’s request to be relieved from active duty was approved, effective October 31, 1941. He returned to his St. Paul office in the state Capitol building and dove into the tasks at hand, such as creating a State Defense Force to replace National Guard units now in federal service. He also attended to issues on a national level. The politics of the Guard had always held his keen attention and, as sitting president of the Adjutant Generals Association and previous president (1928-30) of the National Guard Association of the United States (NGAUS), Walsh had become part of a small, inner-circle of influential

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With former President Truman at the 1959 dedication of NGAUS’s first National Guard Memorial Building in Washington, D.C. Walsh was instrumental in getting it built.

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leaders in the Guard. The group also included Milton Reckford, Adjutant General of Maryland, and Edward Martin, Adjutant General and soon-to-be Governor of Pennsylvania. The ever-present tension between Army regulars and the Guard had taken a critical turn in early 1943. Lieutenant General Leslie McNair, Commanding General of Army Ground Forcesⁱ and other powerful members of the General Staff were laying the groundwork for a plan to essentially kill the Guard as a viable military force after the war. The threat was real.

At an emergency meeting of NGAUS that April, Walsh was once again offered the mantle of president—except this time he was charged to do nothing less than save the post-war Guard. He had little to work with. Nearly all the Guard's standing leadership were fully engaged fighting the war. The association itself had no office or staff, little money, and scant organization. But the National Guard did enjoy broad public support. It had the Militia Clause of the Constitution. It had good relations with most elected officials. And it had Walsh. Walsh tackled the job with characteristic vigor, splitting his time between NGAUS in Washington and his Adjutant General duties in St. Paul. Using personal funds, he set up headquarters in downtown Washington, hired a two-person staff, and went to work garnering reinforcement for his message. Walsh liked the interplay of high stakes politics. He was not afraid of powerful bullies, and he knew how and when to “call a spade a spade, and not a gardening instrument.”ⁱⁱ



Walsh upon his retirement as Adjutant General in 1949.

Challenges to the Guard's future well-being seemed to be coming from all sides. There was the Wadsworth-Gurney Bill, a congressional initiative for post-war Universal Military Training (UMT) that could threaten the Guard's status as the nation's principal reserve force. It had a counterpart, the May Bill, which looked even more threatening. There was the Select Committee on Post-War Military Policy (the Woodrum Committee), which had the look of a loose cannon. There were newspaper and magazine articles that sometimes cast the National Guard in an unflattering light. When a Special Planning Division (a War Department planning staff headed by Brigadier General William F. Tompkins) released a draft document entitled “Outline of the Post-War Military Establishment” in January 1944, the Guard was conspicuously absent from its pages. Not only that, no representative of the Guard had been included on Tompkins' staff. McNair, quickly responding to the draft document, laid his cards right on the table and recommended, “That the National Guard be dispensed with as a component of the Army.”ⁱⁱⁱ Walsh counterattacked. He referred to his opponents as caste-serving “Regular Army Samurai.” He pointed out that Section 5 of the National Defense Act of 1933 specified that any proposal to modify the Guard's role required study by a panel composed of regular Army and Guard officers. He wrote a lengthy, detailed treatise on the capabilities of the Guard—along with a razor sharp rebuttal of those who would dismantle it—and he began to round up backing from influential friends of the Guard on Capitol Hill, in the American Legion and VFW, and within the military itself.

As it turned out, forces had already been at work within the War Department—albeit more quietly—to ensure the Guard's future. Brigadier General John McAuley Palmer, U.S. Army Retired, had been recalled to active duty to conduct research and serve as an advisor to General George Marshall, Army Chief of Staff, on civilian and military personnel issues. Palmer, who was sympathetic to the Guard, reminded Marshall about Section 5. It meant, in effect, that the exclusion of a Guard representative on Tompkins' staff

was illegal. Moreover, both men understood the political brouhaha that would surely follow any serious attempt to cut the Guard out of post-war Army plans. For his part, Marshall had a good grasp of the shortcomings and strengths of the Guard. He appreciated the Guard's role in American life, not to mention the substantial contribution citizen-soldiers were currently making to the war, and he directed that the Guard immediately have a seat at the table in any planning that affected the post-war Guard.

As a result, the Special Planning Division became a forum for Guard leaders and Army staff to address their concerns.^{iv} In August 1944 it issued a circular that set forth principles favoring a mix of professional soldiers and citizen-soldiers in post-war national defense. Marshall approved it and ordered the group to then hammer out a workable plan of action. Walsh became a critical player in the negotiations, aided immeasurably by General Reckford, who had returned to Washington from duty overseas as the European Theater's Provost Marshal. By war's end, a War Department directive spelled out the Guard's mission, purpose, and force structure. The National Guard would remain as the country's principal reserve force—a real partner in national defense—while retaining its dual state/federal role.

The Guard had been integral to America's victory in World War Two, in spite of accusations from some sources that it was ill-prepared in the conflict's early stages. The fact was that without the ready, standing force it provided at the outset, the nation could not have launched military initiatives so quickly after Pearl Harbor. Citizen soldiers bore their full share of combat. With blood and sacrifice, they served ably and honorably, in virtually every major action, in all theaters of operation.

Walsh stayed on as NGAUS president after the war, playing a key role in gaining approval for a larger post-war Guard to be organized into 27 divisions, 21 regimental combat teams, and hundreds of separate companies and battalions. Among seven new divisions to be organized was the 47th "Viking" Division, with headquarters in St. Paul. Working as a team, Walsh and Reckford pressed tirelessly for more federal funds without sacrificing the Guard's unique autonomy as a state force. It was always a delicate balancing act, involving high stakes and trade-offs at both state and federal levels, but real success came in 1948 when the draft law expired and Guard enlistments took a nosedive. Intense lobbying brought a million dollar allotment from Congress to beef up Guard recruitment. There were other momentous successes that year as well: retirement pay for long-serving Guardsmen; active duty pay equal to that of one's Regular counterparts; a right to attend the most advanced military education programs; and derailment in Congress of a chief proposal of the Gray Board^v for a national militia and merger of the National Guard and Reserves into the Regulars.

Other postwar issues also consumed attention: a new Air National Guard to parallel the Army National Guard; reorganization of the National Guard Bureau; a new office and expanded staff for NGAUS; publication of a monthly magazine to serve as a tool for public relations and improved communication with Guard officers on a national level; and ceaseless maneuvering for resources and policies favorable to the Guard.

As mandated by law, Walsh retired as Minnesota's Adjutant General on his 62nd birthday, October 3, 1949. He did so with mixed emotions because he had held the post for 22 years (24 if you counted his two years as Acting AG), but it freed him to give full attention to his work as president of NGAUS. A signature accomplishment came the following year when the federal government agreed to assume most of the construction and maintenance costs for armories. Then came battles over basic training requirements, how the Guard was activated and deployed during the Korean War, and over renewed attempts by the Department of Defense to strip the Guard of its federal role and make it into a solely homeland defense force—all against the complicated backdrop of Cold War politics and global obligations.

Walsh's second retirement came in October 1957 when he stepped down as NGAUS president. He had been its president for 14 consecutive, pivotal years. Before departing, he launched a drive to build a permanent home for NGAUS, a goal realized two years later with the dedication of an imposing National Guard

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Memorial Building at One Massachusetts Avenue in Washington, DC.^{vi}

Returning to Minnesota, he pursued his hobby of gardening, kept in touch with old colleagues, and eventually purchased a house in Stillwater that was next door to his daughter and two grandsons. He died August 29, 1975, about a month short of his 88th birthday and was laid to rest in Camp Ripley's Pioneer Cemetery. Ironically, he probably outlived the doctors who insisted in 1941 that Walsh's health disqualified him for field command.

Looking back, it would be misleading to conclude that General Walsh was personally responsible for "saving the National Guard" during a critical time in its history. Walsh took pride in his accomplishments, but he would have been first to give credit where it was due: namely, a very long list of people who collectively labored toward that end—and not the least of whom were countless thousands of ordinary citizen-soldiers and airmen whose service and accomplishments gave honor to the organization of which they were part. Nevertheless, it is a fact that Walsh provided unwavering leadership for these efforts at a time decisive to the Guard's future. Fundamental policies and practices that today are taken for granted took shape on his watch. Without his vision, vigilance, and formidable skills, things could very well have taken a different turn for the Guard.

Notes

i General McNair, a West-Pointer whose distain for the Guard was well-known, was also a Minnesotan. He grew up in Verndale.

ii Hill, 343.

iii McNair, 199.

iv NGAUS's role as a first-line defender of the Guard was crucial during the war because the National Guard Bureau, a branch of the War Department charged with representing Guard interests, had been gutted in 1942. Converted to little more than a caretaking detachment for Guard records, reports, and disbursement vouchers, it no longer had direct access to high levels in the Army's chain of command.

v A study group appointed by the Secretary of Defense and headed by Assistant Secretary of the Army Gordon Gray.

vi The building has since been replaced by a much larger structure, but its "Walsh-Reckford Hall of States" stands as a permanent tribute to the invaluable work of both men on behalf of the National Guard.

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Walsh papers in the Minnesota Military Museum archives.

Curator's Notes By Doug Bekke

Merl Fletcher has been an important worker/volunteer at the Minnesota Military Museum since 2006. Merl passed away on March 29th and he will be greatly missed by all who knew him. He was a really nice guy. Merl was very dedicated to his wide ranging work at the museum, and he often repeated to me how honored he felt to be able to work at the museum honoring Minnesota's veterans. We all feel honored to have been able to know Merl and to have worked with him. Since his passing the question keeps coming up of who is going to do this or who is going to do that. In the past it was always Merl quietly putting his many skills to work. From building or hanging cabinets, cleaning guns or edged weapons, researching a missing part on something or helping put an exhibit together, to changing light bulbs, hauling lumber, or dusting the display cases, Merl could always be counted on. Our sympathy goes out to his widow Marge (who also works at the museum) and to their family. Merl will be missed every day, but he will be fondly remembered by all who had the pleasure of knowing him.



This past winter the museum received a medium size Legacy Grant through the Minnesota Historical Society to computerize the artifact collection catalog. This is a huge job, and to accomplish it the museum hired Jeff Bloom. Jeff has many skills and his specialty is in aviation artifacts where we had a weakness in our knowledge base. We will be putting all of his skills to work. The museum's current catalog is on 5x8 paper cards, and all the cards, especially from the museum's early years, need to be checked for accuracy. This means pulling the card, finding the artifact, checking and/or correcting the data, and entering the information into the PastPerfect computer program. To assist in accomplishing this huge and time consuming project, and in anticipation of getting the Legacy Grant, we started checking cards against artifacts well over a year ago. Once the card's information is verified, it becomes a simple job of data entry. Additionally, many of the artifacts will be photographed as part of the documentation process so a special photography area is being established. (Does anyone have any dusty, unused, photography lights sitting in the corner that they might consider donating?)

So who is assisting with all this work? Primarily it is Doug Thompson, who has now been working at the museum for several years and who has provided invaluable service applying his vast knowledge of military artifacts. But the work is too much for Doug alone. Over the past few months our director, Jeff Thielen has instituted a program to recruit volunteers to assist with the many tasks waiting to be started, worked on, and/or completed. This program continues to seek volunteers for a wide variety of tasks. Working with me on the Legacy Grant project and various curatorial projects are Kerry Beckenbach, John Duehs, Harold Fiala, Neil Anderson, and Austin Osman. Some of these volunteers have been associated with the museum for years on various informal levels, others are at the museum for the first time. In every case, they are doing a great job and their work is very much appreciated.

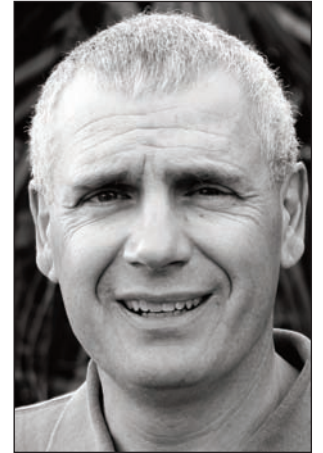
Work progresses on the restoration of a WWI German trench mortar in anticipation of our WWI 100th anniversary exhibit opening in the summer 2016. Much thanks to Hanspeter and Gisele Borwarth for their support, and especially to their son, Dennis, for his incredible machinist work on recreating a part.

Fund raising is important to the Museum's ability to accomplish its mission. We just received word that the Museum received another grant from the St Paul Foundation, Katherine B. Andersen Fund. Cash donations made by new donors, or by donors who have not donated in the past year, will be matched dollar for dollar by the fund. This is an important help to the museum and something the museum is very happy to receive. Now the museum needs your assistance to meet the terms of the grant.

From time to time the museum needs and occasionally receives the support of individuals to acquire artifacts relating to historical events in Minnesota's military history. Currently a rifle is for sale for \$6000 that is documented to have been found/captured on the Wood Lake Battlefield in 1862. Wood Lake was the major and culminating battle of the 1862 Dakota War. Wouldn't it be great for a donor to step forward with a tax deductible contribution to purchase this important piece of Minnesota history?

Director's Update

By Jeff Thielen



In the last issue of Allies I mentioned we were expanding the volunteer program at the museum in an effort to improve the overall experience of our visitors. Small nonprofits such as ours would be lost without volunteers and the most successful nonprofits usually have a plethora of volunteers doing a variety of jobs to make them successful. National Volunteer week was April 15-21, 2012, and celebrated ordinary people doing extraordinary things to improve their communities. The week highlighted the enormous contributions volunteers make every day for their organizations and their communities. As I approach my one year anniversary with the museum, I am a firm believer that volunteers are the key to the continued success of the Military Historical Society of Minnesota and the museum. I encourage all of you to support our volunteer program and to ask yourself if there is something more you could do as a volunteer.

This organization exists because a group of concerned volunteers knew the importance of preserving our military history. Some of these volunteers are still a part of our Board of Directors and continue to volunteer their time and talents for the good of the organization. Over the past few months I have been able to set my watch by a crew of volunteers who come in on the same one or two days a week at the same time to help us out with projects large and small. All of these volunteers are providing a valuable service to the organization and the projects they work on would not be done without them.

On April 28th we will have our first volunteer training day. We hope that from this training day we will have enough volunteers to have at least one volunteer to work every day of the week and augment the one paid employee who normally staffs the museum. Volunteers will assist employees with office duties, greet visitors, assist in the store, and lead tours.

We are especially excited about volunteers leading tours. Typically we have 50 to 60 tours a year and having a cadre of docents and tour guides, some in period uniform, will be a big plus for museum visitors.

I encourage each of you to check out the volunteer opportunities listed on our website and think about ways you might be able to help out. We would greatly appreciate any extra effort you could give us as a volunteer. Please contact me if you have specific questions on how you can help.

Until next time, I wish you the best and thank you for all of your support to the Military Historical Society and Military Museum of Minnesota.

Museum receives \$43,400 'Legacy' grant

Days are numbered for the museum's outmoded artifact card catalog. Thanks to a \$43,400 Minnesota Historical and Cultural Heritage Grant (more popularly known as a "Legacy" grant after the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment to Minnesota's Constitution in 2008) we can develop a computerized inventory management system to replace the outmoded 5x7 inch cards now being used to record details about artifacts.

Specifically, the grant has allowed us purchase software and hardware and to hire a full-time Collections Specialist, Jeff Bloom, to get the project underway. He will have primary responsibility for creating the database, implementing a system for recording information about objects in the collection, training others, and conducting a physical inventory on a portion of the museum's ever-growing collection. The project will be done in phases, with Phase One (the period covered by the grant) expected to take a year. The project will be under the general supervision of Doug Bekke, museum curator, who will be the project manager. The state grant will be supplemented by nearly \$19,000 in cash and in-kind services from the museum's own operational budget. "This will be a huge undertaking," said Bekke, "but it absolutely has to be done if we are to keep track of what we have. We couldn't put it off any longer."



JEFF BLOOM

Artifact Donations (Jan. 1 through Mar. 31, 2012)

Uniforms: Belt ▪ Blouse, female dress WWII ▪ Boots ▪ Blouse, USA uniform WWI ▪ Cap, First Minnesota Artillery ▪ Cap, garrison (2) ▪ Cape, WWII nurse ▪ Coat (2) ▪ Coat, USAF ▪ Coveralls ▪ Field jacket ▪ Gloves, pr (2) ▪ Hat, campaign ▪ Hat, female WWII ▪ Hat, Soviet winter ▪ Hat, visor ▪ Hood, winter ▪ Jacket, flight ▪ Overcoat, wool ▪ Shirt, dress (7) ▪ Shirt, fatigue (6) ▪ Skirt, WWII ▪ Suit, Italian camouflage ▪ Suspenders (3) ▪ T-shirts ▪ Trousers, dress ▪ Trousers, fatigue (4) ▪ Trousers, USA wool WWI ▪ Underwear ▪

Equipment: Belt, pack (2) ▪ Cover, shovel ▪ Flashlight ▪ Footlocker (2) ▪ Goggles ▪ Helmet, flight ▪ Helmet, M-1 (2) ▪ Liner, poncho (2) ▪ Sleeping bags (3) ▪ Strap, sleeping bag (4) ▪

Miscellaneous: Booklets ▪ Books ▪ Collar brass ▪ Cookware, enamel ▪ Cookware repair kit (2) ▪ Currency ▪ Documents ▪ Dog tags ▪ Field Manuals ▪ File cabinets (4) ▪ Flags (3) ▪ Flat files (3) ▪ Insignia ▪ Lapel pins ▪ Magazines ▪ Maps ▪ Medals ▪ Patches ▪ Photographs ▪ Ribbons ▪ Scrapbooks ▪ Souvenir items ▪ Stencils ▪ Towels (3) ▪ Training Manuals ▪ VHS/DVD converter ▪ Videotapes ▪ Walking stick ▪ Workbench

Weapons and related items: Bandolier, British ▪ Belt, cartridge ▪ Belt, pistol (2) ▪ Canteen (4) ▪

Memorials

(Jan. 1 through Mar. 31, 2012)

Given by:

Merl & Marge Fletcher
Art Ludwig
Ray & Shirley Lunde
Duane Marholz
Sidney K. Schmuckler

In Memory of:

CW5 (Ret) Robert Tretter
COL Patrick Kidder
Harlan Hansen
James Lageson
Lowell Torseth

Contributions Honor Roll (Jan. 1 through Mar. 31, 2012)

Renewing Members: Richard Kaasa ▪ Bernard Koskovich ▪ Duane J. Marholz ▪ Ron Miller ▪ William Morgan, Jr. ▪ Richard Morey ▪ Steve Rannenberg ▪ Donald M. Ritchie ▪ Harry Sieben ▪ John Sjogren ▪ LaVon M. Skoog ▪ Fredric Steinhauser ▪ Jon Stratte ▪ Larry Swenson ▪ Marvin Tenhoff ▪ Doug Thompson

New Members: John H. Andrews ▪

American Legion: Post 102, Anoka ▪ Post 147 Auxiliary, Big Lake ▪ Post 126 Auxiliary, Cosmos ▪ Post 377, Delano ▪ Post 281, Janesville ▪ Post 566, Lino Lakes ▪ Post 101, Melrose ▪ Post 178 Auxiliary, Milaca ▪ Post 234, Minneapolis ▪ Post 59, Montevideo ▪ Post 75 Auxiliary, New Richland ▪ Post 271, Paynesville ▪ Post 137 Auxiliary, Royalton ▪ Post 27 Auxiliary, Warren ▪

VFW: Post 4955, Appleton ▪ Post 230 Auxiliary, Columbia Heights ▪ Post 4210-7 Auxiliary, Forest Lake ▪ Post 1720, Grand Rapids ▪ Post 1210 Auxiliary, Hastings ▪ Post 1140 Auxiliary, Long Prairie ▪ Post 9713 Auxiliary, Mankato ▪ Post 4393, Northfield ▪ Post 5252, Pelican Rapids ▪ Post 9073, Randall ▪ Post 1215 Auxiliary, Rochester ▪ Post 4847 Auxiliary, St. Cloud ▪ Post 3922, Wadena ▪ Post 1642, Waseca ▪

Donations: Eugene Andreotti ▪ Baxter Lions ▪ Bieganek Insurance ▪ Bremer Bank ▪ Buffalo Lions ▪ Falls Dentists ▪ Falls Furniture ▪ Goldeneye Solutions ▪ Gold n' Plump ▪ Hilmerson Collision ▪ Alan Johnson ▪ Larson Boats ▪ Bernard Lieder ▪ Little Falls Eyecare ▪ Little Falls Lions ▪ Duane Lorsung ▪ Betty Masoner ▪ Paul Melchert ▪ Minnesota Power ▪ Floyd Nagler ▪ Dave Pearson ▪ Pleasureland ▪ Spectrum Marketing ▪ St. Gabriel's Hospital ▪ Thomas Wilharber

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Doug Bekke, **Curator**
Leland P. Smith, **Archivist**
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MMM loses a great volunteer

The Minnesota Military Museum lost a great volunteer and friend with the passing of Merl R. Fletcher, 64. He was employed part time for the past five years, but also volunteered countless hours.

“He was completely dependable and 200% trustworthy,” said Doug Bekke, curator at the museum. “He was a great co-worker and a great friend who was very well liked by all.” (See more on Fletcher in Bekke’s column in this issue.)

Fletcher was born in 1947 in Crosby, and he was raised in Browerville. He served in the Army from 1968 to 1972.

He was married to the former Marge Skinner in 1975 in Sisseton, S.D., and was employed by Banta Printing Co. in Long Prairie for 34 years. He enjoyed working on cars, fishing, reading history books, working in his garage and taking care of their home.

He joined the staff at the museum in 2007 and was involved in almost every aspect of the museum. He is survived by Marge, three children and seven grandchildren.



Merl R. Fletcher
1947-2012

Artifact Donation Honor Roll (Jan. 1 through Mar. 31, 2012)

The museum gratefully acknowledges donations of artifacts from the following:

John H. Andrews ▪ Dave Clifford ▪ Nancy Cyr ▪ Damon Farber Associates ▪ Norbert Fiedler ▪ Dean Fletcher ▪ Tom Geer ▪ Wendy Henagin ▪ Richard O. Holtberg ▪ Dan Hudson ▪ Dan Jenniges ▪ Tim Layeux ▪ Joseph Ludwig ▪ Kathie Matschke ▪ Shannon & Vickie Owen ▪ Gail Rapson ▪ John & Jacqueline Salisbury ▪ Joleen Schwartz ▪ Hugh Schilling ▪ Ken Senkyr ▪ Ken Slipka ▪ Leland Smith ▪ Kitty Waltz ▪