

Sidney L Smith

post #24 of

The American Legion



2007 - 2008

HISTORY OF
Sidney L Smith

post #24 of

The American Legion

ABERDEEN, SOUTH DAKOTA

FOR 2007 TO 2008

Compiled by: Charles D Strom - Post Historian

Introduction

History - The American Legion

In late January, 1919, as the first World War drew near to completion, a group of officers met at Faubourg St. Honore in Paris France. All four were combat line officers (at the battalion or regimental level);

Lt. COL. Theodore Roosevelt, Jr. (son of our 26th US President), from the 1st Division,

Lt. COL. George White, general HQ of the AEF in France,

Lt. COL. William Donovan, part of New York's "Fighting 69th", and

Major Eric Fisher Wood, of the 88th Division.

With a lead role taken by Roosevelt, these four men conceived the idea of a veteran's organization, similar to the Grand Army of the Republic that had thrived after the conclusion of the Civil War. With a potential membership pool of over two million servicemen from the war, most of whom had been unfamiliar with Europe in any but the

vaguest of ways, the organization would be a tremendous opportunity for fellowship as servicemen started returning home. Several names were considered, including “Liberty League”, “Legion of Honor”, and “American Crusaders”.

General John J. “Black Jack” Pershing - head of the AEF - was initially opposed to the idea, but as it’s popularity grew in the ranks of the officers and enlisted men he agreed to give the subject a chance. An organizational meeting was set at the Inter-Allied Officers’ Club in Paris for the 15th to 17th of March in 1919. This event, which came to be known as the “Paris Caucus”, is considered the of

This second caucus was held in St. Louis, Missouri during May of 1919. There, the American Legion constitution was completed and a temporary draft was submitted to the membership. Included in the Legion's mission were relief, employment, and Americanism programs.

Congress granted the Legion a national charter on September 16, 1919 and the first national convention was held in Minneapolis Nov 10th - 12th of that year. In Minneapolis The American Legion adopted a permanent constitution and elected officers to head the organization.

The charter was amended in 1942 to admit World War II veterans and again in 1950 to include veterans of the Korean War. Later it included soldiers who had served in conflicts in Lebanon/Grenada, Panama, Persian Gulf and has been open since August 2, 1990 until congress closes the dates.

The Legion's major concern has always been the veterans. It played an important role in the creation of the US Veterans Administration and the enactment of the GI Bill of Rights for World War II and Korean Veterans. Also important has been the community, youth, and Americanism.

The American Legion temporary national

headquarters, set after the St Louis Caucus, was located in New York City, but delegates to the first convention chose Indianapolis over Washington DC as the permanent home for the national organization in a close (361-323) vote.

The Legion does, however, still keep an office in Washington DC, just three blocks from the White House, to support frequent visits to the seat of government by the National Commander. Also located here are offices of an executive director, and operations for Legislative, Economics, National Security, Foreign Relations, Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation, and Media Relations.

The American Legion's national headquarters is located at 700 N Pennsylvania St, in Indianapolis, Indiana and is part of a development known as the Indiana War Memorial Plaza.

History - South Dakota

Department of The American Legion

The South Dakota Department of The American Legion was organized simultaneously with the national organization. South Dakota Adjutant General William A. Morris named Theodore R. Johnson of Sioux Falls to select a committee of representative ex-service men to attend the first caucus in St Louis, Missouri, May 8-10, 1919.

After the first national caucus, a temporary South Dakota organization was formed at Vermillion on May 15, 1919 with Theodore R. Johnson as chairman. The first state convention was held in Sioux Falls on July 14 and 15, 1919. Myron L. Shade of Mitchell was elected the first Department Commander. Forty-eight posts had been organized by convention time.

The South Dakota Department now consists of about 260 posts with about 26,000 members.

One of the American Legion programs with South Dakota roots is American Legion baseball, now a nationwide program. It was conceived at the state convention at Milbank in 1925. Frank Sieh of Aberdeen originated the idea. A granite monument at Milbank

commemorates the formation of Legion Baseball there.

The South Dakota American Legion Department Headquarters is located in the Codington County courthouse in Watertown. The South Dakota Legion contributed to the construction cost of that courthouse and thus was granted rent-free space in the courthouse for the life of the building.

History - Sidney L Smith, Post #24 - Aberdeen, SD

Like most towns in the great plains, Aberdeen was started as a railroad town. Charles H Prior, the town site agent for the Chicago, Milwaukee, and St Paul railroad filed the first papers at the land office in Watertown, part of the Dakota Territory, for a town to be located at the spot where his employer's rail line was expected to intersect the Chicago Northwestern's proposed line. Alexander Mitchell, president of the Chicago, Milwaukee, & St Paul, named the town-to-be Aberdeen, after his own hometown in Scotland. The first plat of land was deeded on the 3rd of January, 1881 and the first train arrived July 6th with the post office established that August. In 1885, Aberdeen was named the Seat of Brown County.

The railroad continued to play a large role in the growth of Aberdeen, after the initial two lines met in 1881, seven more were added so that by 1906 nine sets of tracks lead into what would become known as the Hub City; four lines for the Chicago, Milwaukee, & St Paul, two lines for the Chicago Northwestern, one line for the Great Northern, and two lines for the Minneapolis & St Louis.

The convergence of rail lines made Aberdeen a natural stopping point for military troop trains; starting when South Dakota's First Infantry Regiment was welcomed home here by President McKinley in October of 1899 after returning from duty under General McArthur in the Philippines during the Spanish American War. The rail lines also played a vital role in delivering recruits to the US Army in both World Wars, and when the USO and Red Cross built a canteen in the Milwaukee Rail depot in 1943, they couldn't have known that it would become one of Aberdeen's most memorable locations.

From its opening on the 14th of Aug until just before Christmas, the canteen provided over 150,000 free meals to troops passing through the station; a remarkable endeavor, but the real history was still to come.

Local farmers, still eager to contribute to the canteen despite being well past the harvest season, donated pheasants from recent hunts to the canteen and started a trend that would lead to the canteen becoming unofficially renamed the "Pheasant Canteen". With an average of over 500 soldiers per day traveling through the depot, the Pheasant Canteen continued to give a free meal to every serviceman, highlighted by the now famous pheasant sandwiches. Any soldier arriving at the depot on their

birthday would also receive a special cake, and there was a decorated tree each Christmas and colored eggs each Easter. When the Pheasant Canteen closed on the 31st of March, 1946, between 510,000 and 600,000 servicemen had been feed, all at no cost to themselves or the military. Every meal was donated by the residents of Aberdeen and 40 other towns within a 75 mile radius.

Of course, support for the serviceman was nothing new to the Aberdeen area. The VFW had formed a presence in the town as early as 1903 (fourth oldest continuously active post), and The American Legion followed in 1919.

When the first organizational meeting of the South Dakota American Legion was held in Vermillion on May 15th, 1919, several servicemen from Aberdeen attended; three of them, E.B. Harkin, Royal C. Johnson, and P.J. Maloney, were selected to serve on the temporary Executive Committee for the new group. Two months later, when the first SD Legion convention was held in Sioux Falls, Aberdeen was one of 48 posts that had already signed on to the organization, having been chartered on the 14th of July, 1919 with eighteen members. Post officers that first year were; Perry Peters - Commander, Ivan Leach - Vice Commander, Paul Maloney - Adjutant, Fred Huntington - Insurance, and Paul Kiser - Publicity.

Post meetings were held in the Municipal Auditorium, and the primary focus of the Aberdeen American Legion during those early years was on aiding men who were just finishing their military service and returning home. They started a veterans employment program in the city, had a theatrical troupe that performed annual plays (starting in 1920) at the local theater, and had an active post band.

Music in particular, was a source of pride for many of Post 24's early years. In addition to the musical theater and post band, a drum and bugle corps was organized in 1927 by Carl Eilert, and during the 30's they won eight state championships (and missed the other two for prior engagements) and made the national finals.

The Sidney L Smith post was named, though slightly incorrectly, in honor of Private First Class Sidney Lawrence Smith, the first Aberdeen casualty of the US military in the “Great War” (World War I). Private Smith actually went by the name of Larry, and the name of the post should have been the “S. Lawrence Smith post of The American Legion”, but when the charter was drawn up, the post was actually constituted as “Sidney L Smith”.

Smith was not the only name considered for the honor, John Thomas and Colonel W.A. Hazle where also considered when the post was being formed. Col Hazle was the highest ranking officer to serve from Aberdeen during the war, but was discarded as the national rules specified that posts could not be named after living persons. John Thomas, son of Professor and Mrs Iver D Thomas, was actually the first person from Aberdeen to give the ultimate sacrifice in what would become known as the First World War, and there was a group of initial members who championed having him as the namesake of the post. John Thomas, however, had enlisted and fought in the Canadian military, and majority of members thought it was better to name the post after a member of the US armed services, so Sidney Lawrence Smith was chosen.

Born in Canton, Illinois (1896) and having gone to

military school in Roswell, NM, S Lawrence “Larry” Smith had moved to Aberdeen with his parents, Professor and Mrs S Lincoln Smith, in 1915 and had joined the military as part of the South Dakota national guard, enlisting just three days after the US declared it’s involvement in World War I.

He was stationed at Camp Pontis in Mobridge, SD when he transferred to the 148th Machine Gun Battalion. He later transferred again to the 1st Infantry Division, 18th Brigade, Company L where he saw action at the Battle of Cantigny, and was in the trenches for 70 days at Montdidier, France. In Fosh’s big drive, Smith’s company took part in the battle of Chateau-Thierry, and then Sessions, where he was sent out as part of a twenty man scouting party commanded by Captain Renne. This unit came under fire, was surrounded by German soldiers, and was unable to retreat while conducting their reconnaissance.

Messages had come back to the family that Pvt Smith had been wounded, reports followed that he was in a hospital, but then no further word was received. Smith was listed as missing in action for nine months before Congressman Royal C. Johnson assisted the Red Cross’ efforts to determine his fate. Finally a letter arrived from

Captain Renne, one of the few men to survive the encounter. “Sidney Laurence Smith, killed in action by a German machine gun at Siossons, France.”

Smith’s official status was soon changed from MIA to KIA, and a telegram was sent to his family from the adjutant general’s office at Washington, DC, it read as follows:

"Pvt. Sidney L. Smith, Infantry previously reported severely wounded in action between July 18 and July 24, now reported Killed in action July 20." [1918]

Thanks/Acknowledgments

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The Alexander Mitchell Library and the Dakota Prairie Museum, in Aberdeen, SD, for the information on Aberdeen's origins and military history.

The-roundup, Honolulu, Hi (<http://www.the-roundup.com>), for all their information on Sidney L Smith in their family genealogy.

Table of Contents

2007 - 2008 1

Introduction Page -2-
The American Legion Page -2-
South Dakota
Department Page -6-
Sidney L Smith, Post #24 Page -8-
Thanks/Acknowledgments Page -15-

Table of Contents Page -16-

Preamble to the Constitution of The American Legion
..... Page -18-

The Year that was 2007 Page -19-
Chapter One: Roster of Post Officers Page -20-
Chapter Two: Post Committee Chairs Page -25-
Chapter Three: Post Chronicle Page -27-
2007 officers Page -27-
Bicycle Safety Day Page -28-
Boys State Page -31-
Girl Scout Page -32-
High School awards Page -33-
Horse Races Page -33-
high school awards Page -34-
Memorial Day Page -35-
Legion Baseball Page -36-
Department Convention Page -37-
sporting goods equipment Page -37-
Monster Burgers Page -39-
Venison Ready to Eat Page -39-
Gypsy Day parade Page -40-
Turkey Shoot Page -41-

Veterans Day	Page -41-
Early Bird Supper	Page -41-
County Government Day	Page -42-
Law Enforcement Officer of the Year	Page -43-
Fire Fighter/EMT of the Year	Page -43-
Mid-winter Convention	Page -44-
Past Commanders Night	Page -44-
Boys State Interviews	Page -45-
Law Enforcement Officer of the Year	Page -46-
Fire Fighter/EMT of the Year	Page -46-
DARE Essays	Page -46-
Wrap-up	Page -47-
INDEX	Page -48-

Preamble to the Constitution of The American Legion

For God and Country, we associate ourselves together for the following purposes:

To uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States of America;

to maintain law and order;

to foster and perpetuate a one hundred percent Americanism;

to preserve the memories and incidents of our associations in the Great Wars;

to inculcate a sense of individual obligation to the community, state and nation;

to combat the autocracy of both the classes and the masses;

to make right the master of might;

to promote peace and good will on earth;

to safeguard and transmit to Posterity the principles of justice, freedom and democracy;

to consecrate and sanctify our comradeship by our devotion to mutual helpfulness.

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The Year that was 2007

by Charles D. Strom, Historian

Chapter One: Roster of Post Officers



2007 Post Commander - Steve Nemmers



First Vice Commander - Sam Olson



Second Vice Commander - Tom Perrizo



Chaplain - Al Sebert



Adjutant - Gene Schumacher



Finance - Rich Kezar



Sergeant at Arms - Greg Vande Kamp



Assistant Sergeant at Arms - Sid Beckler



Historian - Dale Strom



Service - Tom Gohn

Chapter Two: Post Committee Chairs



Americanism - Paula Beckler



Athletics - Tom Perrizo



Employment - Garry Warne



Children and Youth - Earl Schultz

Chapter Three: Post Chronicle

Commander Steve Nemmers and the 2007 officers for post #24 started their term on the 16th of April, when they were duly elected by the members of the Sidney L Smith post, convened in regular session at the VFW building, 821 Circle Drive, Aberdeen, SD. The complete slate of officers, are as follows:

<u>2007 Post Officers</u>	
Commander	Steve Nemmers
1 st Vice	Sam Olsen
2 nd Vice	Tom Perrizo
Finance	Rich Kezar
Chaplin	Al Sebert
Sergeant @ Arms	Greg Vande Kamp
Asst sgt@Arms	Sid Beckler
Historian	Dale Strom
Employment	Gary Warne
Athletic	Tom Perrizo
Americanism	Paula Beckler
Service	Tom Gohn
Children and Youth	Earl Schultz
Adjutant*	Gene Schumacher

* Adjutant Schumacher was appointed by the commander and approved by the floor in the May regular meeting.

All officers were elected to the positions recommended by the Nominations Committee, and where elected unanimously with no nominations put forth by the floor.

As is always the case, there was a flurry of activity to start off the new Post year.

The second Sunday after elections, April 29th, was the date of the joint Bicycle Safety Day. This event was co-sponsored by all three Aberdeen veterans groups, The American Legion, the VFW, and the DAV, as well as the Aberdeen Police Department. As the first year of the event, expectations had been for approximately 20 to 30 elementary school kids to show up with their bikes. We were pleasantly surprised by a turnout of more than double that number as 65 children went through the safety course that Officer Keith Theroux had set up in the back parking lot at the VFW building.

Officer Theroux, 2006 Children & Youth Chair Paula Beckler, and 2006 Americanism Officer Dale Strom were the organizers of the event, but volunteers were numerous; Police Reserve Officers J Arlt, and Mike Miller from the Aberdeen Police Department; Allen Oschner and Todd Bitz from the DAV; Al Sebert of the VFW; Mary Pietz and Arleen Griffith of the VFW Auxilliary, and Steve Nemmers, Greg Vande Kamp, Sid Beckler, Paula Beckler, and Dale Strom from the Legion; as well as the drivers from Aberdeen Ambulance and volunteers from Aberdeen Fire

Department. All of them were needed as well, to run 65 kids through the all the stations.

Each child's bike was registered (Name, address, make/model and serial number of their bike), with the three veterans groups initially intending to split the cost. The registration stickers would allow the bike to be returned if found after being lost or stolen. With the large turnout, the event ran out of registration stickers, but all information was taken down and turned in to the city treasurer so that parents could pick them up later in the week. We also received a pleasant surprise when the City of Aberdeen returned the payment for all 65 registrations and decided to absorb that cost themselves.

Following registration, each bike was inspected by the volunteers from Dakota Outdoors, a local store specializing in bicycle repair. Tires were inflated, breaks were checked, and seats & handles adjusted if needed to fit the rider.

The next stop was to be fitted for a helmet, those children who did not bring their own to the event were given one to use while on the course, and a volunteer police officer, from the Aberdeen bicycle corps, showed the child and parent how to size and adjust the helmet to wear it properly.

The course itself consisted of five skill and safety

stations that covered reading traffic signs, hand signals, avoiding obstacles, safely exiting a driveway onto the street, and dismounting to cross an intersection on the cross-walk. Each station was run by another volunteer from the Aberdeen Police department, with help from a member of one of the service organizations.

After completing the course, each child received a “junior officer” sticker, and a certificate of participation, signed by one of the police officers present. There was also a refreshment table with water, tea, orange drink, cookies, and candy at the end of the course.

Aberdeen Ambulance, and the Aberdeen Fire Department both had vehicles at the event to allow the children to have something to look at while waiting, and to allow them a chance to see the equipment; so that, in the unfortunate case they should be the reason one is needed, they will hopefully be a little less frightened by the ordeal.

Both of those organizations, along with Aberdeen Rural Fire Department and K-Mart, donated helmets to the event. In all, 14 helmets were used, and then given away to children who were present.

Those children and parents who did attend were polled informally, and all said it was a fun and educational day, and they were glad they had attended. Overall, it is fair to

say that the event was a huge success in it's first year, and the Post looks forward to working with the other co-sponsors to host the event again next spring. It was a great way to kick off a new Legion year!

The 6th of May, just one week after the Bike Safety Day, was the local orientation session for students attending Boys State in 2007 from the three schools in Aberdeen. Saturday night was the "Cinco de Mayo storm" that spawned tornados and flooding throughout much of South Dakota, including some of the worst flooding in the history of Aberdeen. With pumping and cleanup still ongoing for so many area families it was a hard call to make on wether or not to have the orientation session but the decision was made to go ahead with it for whoever could make it (one of the main roads leading to the VFW post where the session was to be held was still under a foot of water, and another was closed entirely).

Eight of the fifteen boys selected for Boys State did manage to attend the orientation, along with one parent. None of the 2006 attendees were able to be there, however, so that part of the presentation was missed.

Still, the briefing and Q&A session appeared to be well received by those who could attend, and a few other parents

who called in to ask about the event were directed to the Post web page for an outline of topics covered.

2006 Americanism officer Dale Strom conducted the briefing, with assistance from Greg Vande Kamp. Al Sebert was also on hand, and commander Nemmers stopped in for part of the briefing as well.

The next night, sandwiched in between work and the post executive meeting, commander Nemmers and historian Strom attended a meeting of Girl Scout Troop 106. Three of the troop members (Sarah Rorbach, Tara Rook, and Ashley Thone) had jumped in to help with the bike safety course the Sunday before, covering for post members at one of the stations while those members helped with the larger than expected registration line. As a thank you for their efforts, the post printed up certificates of appreciation and had them signed by commander Nemmers and Officer Theroux, then presented them at the meeting. While there, Nemmers and Strom also spoke about The American Legion, and answered questions from the girls and parents in attendance.

2006 Americanism officer Strom made it three days in a row wearing the Legion colors as Tuesday night was the

Aberdeen Central High School awards night. Citizenship medals were presented to seniors Kaylee Ebach and Andrew Mach, and certificates were presented to the nine junior boys selected to attend Boys State in 2007; Michael Abu-Sirriya, John Boggs, Levi Froke, Eric Hout, Ryan Janish, Eric Paulson, Paul Pierson, Jordan Punt, and Brett Simon.

Then, of course, it was time for Horse Races! Actually, horse race preparation had been ongoing for some time already. Gene Schumacher, Larry Nupen, Ed Lambert, and Tom Perrizo had been selling ads for the race programs since March, the commission received by the post for these ads is a large part of the total funds raised at the event. Second vice Perrizo had also been contacting workers since taking over that position after the April meeting and had a work crew lined up for opening weekend.

With flooding still an issue around town, it was hard to tell what type of crowd to expect at the event. Weather predictions were for a warm, dry weekend (a departure from the normal opening weekend of races), so hopes were high for a good first two days.

Larry Nupen, Garry Warne, Greg Vande Kamp, Rich

Kezar, Sid Beckler, Dale Strom, Gene Schumacher, Vern Bunsness, Al Sebert, Hollis Anderson, Sam Olson, Joel Traphagen, Ed Lambert, Tom Perrizo, and Mike Burke were all on hand at various times throughout that first weekend, and the next two as well, selling racing programs or working the beer concessions for the event.

This standing arrangement with the NAHRA (Northeast Area Horse Racing Association), along with the sale of advertising for the programs, is one of the posts three major fund raisers each year. It is somewhat labor intensive (averaging almost 600 man hours, including the sale of ads), but the work is mostly pleasant and the members have time to talk with the customers, share stories, and “maintain quality control” of the beer coming out of the taps.

Once again the Post members who were present can claim they literally worked for peanuts, as the NAHRA provided the traditional thirty-five pound box of salted-in-the-shell peanuts for both the grandstand and clubhouse volunteers to snack on.

During the same time as the three weekends of horse races, which run through Memorial Day Monday, was the other high school awards night, for Roncalli, on May 15th.

Greg Vande Kamp and Dale Strom represented the post at this event, and awarded Citizenship medals to Micheal Zerr and Kelsey Lonning, as well as certificates for the Boys State selectees from the school.

Memorial Day itself was, as always, a busy day for the Post. Horse Races were on their last day, which includes the Legion Stakes race, Boys State opened up at the campus of NSU in town, and the Post's Memorial Day program was held.

Prior to the day itself, of course, post members had gone out to both Riverside cemeteries and placed flags on the 1100+ military grave sites there, leaving them in place until the Wednesday after Memorial Day. Legionnaire, and Children and Youth Officer, Earl Shultz was interviewed by the Aberdeen American News for their "People Like Me" segment. A photo of Earl was taking while flagging the graves and ran on the front page of the paper for Memorial Day, helping to remind people what the day was really about.

The Legion Firing Squad, and John Nelson, a local boy scout who played *Taps* again this year, appeared at Sacred Heart Cemetery and St Mary's to render honors to the service members interred in each, then they proceeded to

Riverside for the main service.

Due to the flooding that had affected Aberdeen earlier in the month, Sunset Memorial was unable to host the event this year, and a temporary podium was setup instead at Riverside Cemetery (south) in front of the Grand Army of the Republic monument. Jim Hundstad, SD State Senator from District 2 was the keynote speaker for the event, and while those in the crowd had a harder time seeing him without the raised podium, his presentation was still well received.

Then June was rolling in, and that, of course, means Legion Baseball was getting into full swing. The first game of the year was actually the 31st of May at Watertown, with a home match up the next night against Sioux Falls West.

The Smittys had a good season, but came up just short in the playoffs in 2007. Still, with 16 boys on the team again, Legion Baseball remains one of the great programs of our organization, providing guidance for our youth, as well as good PR for The American Legion; keeping our name out in the public eye through our association with the sport.

June is also time for the Department Convention, and delegates from Post 24 headed west to Spearfish to take part in the 89th Convention, held June 7th through the 10th. Also attending the convention from Aberdeen was our Law Enforcement Officer of the year, Keith Theroux, who was the second consecutive LEO from Aberdeen chosen for the same honor at the Department level.

After the helter-skelter couple of months that follow the elections, however, the summer slowed down somewhat after the Department Convention. The post brought one idea back from the convention to work on over the summer, however, and that was a request forwarded to the members there by Department Children and Youth Chair, Sam Vaughn. She had received notice that a group was looking for used sporting goods equipment that could be reconditioned (if needed) and sent to the Rosebud Tribal Reservation to help build youth activities programs there. The Post decided to organize a drive in town with hopes of picking up “a few” items that could go toward this worthy cause. The program had just barely begun, however, when it received a major, and unexpected, boost. Member Greg Vande Kamp was talking with an Aberdeen resident, Dean Shortridge, about the program and Dean, a former golf pro

at the country club, said he would be willing to donate some full sets of golf clubs to help start things out.

“Some” sets ended up being 10 complete bags full of clubs, and the publicity from the newspaper covering his donation helped to generate interest from others. Collection points were set up in the three grocery stores in town, and between them, pickups made when somebody called and requested one, and a donation of a full set of baseball catcher’s pads from the Aberdeen Parks and Recreation office, Post #24 was able to donate two full pickup loads, and a couple of car loads as well, worth of sporting goods to the drive. Equipment ranged from fishing poles & lures, to golf balls & clubs, to inner tubes, baseball bats, bowling balls, and badminton sets. Overall, a very successful program, and one the Post hopes to continue in 2008.

No other post activities were scheduled over the summer months, members attended Department Commander Watts’ homecoming, and the National Convention in Reno, Nevada, but the Post itself was quiet for a few months until September rolled around.

The return of September marked the return of Monster Burgers for another year. The kitchen crew takes the summer months off, turning burger duties over to the VFW from May through August, but returns on the first Monday of September - or, actually, the second Monday since the first was Labor day and no burgers were served. Monster Burgers remained a popular even in 2007, and there were many times when the kitchen sold out of 150 pounds of hamburger in a night. The popularity of the burgers makes this not only one of our bigger fund raisers, but also a key part of our public relations efforts as people continue to associate Monster Burgers with The American Legion.

Also brought to the Post's attention at this time was a proposal to get involved with a project that shows public support for American troops overseas. A local doctor, and post member, Tom Lechner had been quietly running a program he termed VRE, for Venison Ready to Eat (after the military MRE moniker for their rations). This program encouraged local hunters to donate their deer, which was then processed into venison jerkey that could be packed up into 1 pound bundles and distributed to South Dakota troops who requested it. The program started out small

enough that the non-profit organization Dr Lechner had created for it was able to keep up with it for the first few years, but he was afraid that it was starting to grow beyond his ability to administer it anymore, and was wondering if the local post would be interested in becoming involved with it, or even taking it over. The Post's impressions were favorable, but the general consensus was that there was a tremendous potential to the program, and it could best be met if it was a Department wide endeavor. Steps are being taken to that affect even now.

One of the first steps to get the Department involved in the VRE program was to present it at the District 14 meeting October 5th in Selby. The reception to the project was one of mild interest and the Post decided to continue pursuing it.

October 6th was the annual Gypsy Day parade, the homecoming celebration for NSU (the local public university). As is traditional for the post, we had a vehicle in the parade with the commander in it, and had candy walkers on hand to toss out treats for the spectators. The parade entry is not lavish, but it still serves to keep the Legion's name in the public eye.

October is also the time for the Posts other large fund raising event, the annual Turkey Shoot (or Charity Night). The night of games and fun is always a big event for the post and requires many members to make it work. The crowds were exceptional this year, particularly for Bingo, and the workers for that game had a hard time finding seats for everybody who wanted to play.

November, of course, brought the Veterans Day program, or programs as the case was this year. The event with the High School was held early, on November 8th. With Veteran's day itself being on a Sunday, and conflicts with the school's schedule on Friday the 9th, the school program had to either be held Thursday or not until Monday and the decision was made by the VFW (or organizes the event while the Legion handles Memorial Day) to go with the earlier date.

There was a smaller gathering, of just veterans and spouses, on Veterans Day itself. This event was held at the VFW building.

Right between the two Veterans Day programs, on the 10th of November, was the Post's annual Early Bird Supper for members who have the next year's dues paid by that

date. Dues were collected right up until the meal started, as there are always members who chose this event to pay for the next year, and the meal was again well received. Membership Chair, and 1st Vice Commander, Sam Olson was in charge of the event, and while it does not really generate any members that would not otherwise join, it is still a nice opportunity for members to get together and socialize.

Tuesday, November 13th, was County Government Day. Officially this is the responsibility of the county commander, not the Post, but since the event is held in Aberdeen it is natural for the Aberdeen post to take a lead role and we've done so the last few years. In addition to contacting the three schools in Aberdeen about participating, the Post also provided the meal for the event and then bills out the other posts who participated. In a change from the prior two years, the meal in 2007 was pizza rather than a sack lunch, and the change was very well received by the students, as well as being a lower cost alternative.

The Brown County commissioners and the head of each office that was visited were also invited to join in the meal, and this was paid for by the Post.

December was a slow month, Law Enforcement Officer of the Year applications were issued to the six agencies with jurisdiction in the area; the Aberdeen Police Department, the Brown County Sheriff's office, the Department of Game Fish & Parks, the SD Highway Patrol, the US Marshal's office, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Each office was asked to provide one officer for consideration by the 31st of the month.

Fire Fighter/EMT of the Year applications were also handed out to the local fire fighting and paramedic organizations with the same deadline.

Applications for both were collected in January, just after the first of the year, and the Americanism committee read through them to select the officer and firefighter/EMT of the year for 2007.

Also in January, the Post received notice that the Coalition to Salute America's Heros had contacted The American Legion about issuing 1000 grants to service members who had been injured while on active duty in Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom, and that one of the eligible soldiers was from Aberdeen. Plans were quickly made, and the media advised of this award,

and the grant was presented at the Post's January meeting.

The Department's Mid-winter Convention was the next item up, with several post members traveling to Oacoma for the annual event. It remained an ongoing effort of the Post to get the Department involved in the VRE program, and after having Dr Lechner speak at the Midwinter convention was the next step. He gave a presentation on the program that was well received, though that might have had something to do with his decision to bring free samples.

February is the post's traditional observance of Past Commanders Night. After a meal for all living past commanders, the regular meeting was suspended for the memorial service.

At the service, all living present past post commanders are recognized and those who are present are asked to come forward to the front row. Paper poppies are then handed out to the commanders with the names of all deceased past post commanders, and as the names are read by the MC, the poppies are placed into a white cross.

After all past commander's have been honored, new poppies are handed out bearing the names of all members that transferred to Post Everlasting in the prior year.

Again the names are read from the MC's list, and the poppies are placed into a white cross. After the ceremony is over, families are invited to come up and claim the poppy with their deceased's name on it.

The memorial service, which the Post has been conducting for over half a century now, remains a proud and distinctive part of Sidney L Smith, post #24.

Boys State Interviews started up in March, the three local schools had been given applications to pass out to the students in February, and they were collected by Americanism Officer Beckler and those boys who had applied were contacted for interviews.

Twenty-one boys submitted their name in 2008, and came before the committee for their chance to attend Boys State. Each was asked to fill out a second questionnaire which included drawing two essay questions out of a hat and answering one of them. The interviews were scheduled for 30 minutes each, and most ran the full time or just a little longer.

On the end, twenty applicants were selected as primary candidates, and one was chosen as an alternate. Between the interviews and the orientation, however, one of those selected informed the post that he would be unable to

attend and the alternate was advised that he would be attending.

The Law Enforcement Officer of the Year and Fire Fighter/EMT of the Year for Aberdeen, and their families and friends, were invited for the presentation at the March regular meeting of the Post. The Aberdeen News was unable to attend the presentation itself, but once again did a feature interview with both winners.

Also presented at the March meeting were 60 year membership certificates. Several of the post members earned this honor, but only two were able to attend the meeting and have them presented there by the commander; Milbert Shick and Don Meyer. The other members receiving 50 and 60 year certificates had them hand delivered if they lived in Aberdeen, or mailed if they were out of town.

Just as the years first event was part of the Children and Youth program, so was the last one as the Post worked in conjunction with the Aberdeen Police Department to judge DARE Essays. 96 essays were received, from junior high students, on why and how they would stay free of

drugs in high school and then the rest of their life. The essays were broken down in to eight groups of one dozen each and a member read each group and picked the top three from that dozen. The top 24 essays were then judged by a panel of members to choose the three best over all. These three students will each receive a US savings bond for their exemplary work, though the presentation will fall in the next post year.

This was the first year of the Post's participation in this event, but we look forward to continuing it in the future.

Even as the DARE essays were being finished, it was time for the year to Wrap-up. Planning was already in the works for the next Bike Safety day, the District 14 Boys State orientation was coming up, and horse racing was just around the corner and workers were already being contacted. The post is finishing a resolution to be presented at the 90th Department Convention in June of 2008 that the SD Legion takes over the VRE program.

As all of this was going on, however, it was time for the April meeting and the election of a new slate of post officers to take over for the 2008 Legion year.

INDEX

<p>Americanism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Baseball 36 Boys State 31, 45 Chairman 25 Firefighter of the year 43, 46 Government Day 42 Law Officer of the year 43, 46 Memorial Day 35 school awards 32, 34 Veterans Day 41 <p>Athletics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chairman 25 <p>Children & Youth</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bicycle Safety 28 Chairman 26 DARE program 46 Girl Scouts 32 Sports Equipment drive 37 <p>Department Convention 37</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Midwinter 44 <p>Elections</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2007 Results 27 <p>Employment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chairman 26 <p>Fund raisers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> horse racing 33 monster burgers 39 Turkey Shoot 41 <p>God and Country</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Memorial Day 35 <p>Headquarters</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The American Legion 4 The Department of South Dakota .. 7 <p>Membership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early Bird Supper 41 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Memorial Day 35 <p>Officers 27</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adjutant 22 Al Sebert 21 all 27 Assistant Sgt @ Arms 23 Chaplain 21 Commander 20 Dale Strom 24 Finance 22 First Vice 20 Gene Schumacher 22 Greg Vande Kamp 23 Historian 24 Rich Kezar 22 Sam Olson 20 Second Vice 21 Sergeant at Arms 23 Service 24 Sid Beckler 23 Steve Nemmers 20 Tom Gohn 24 Tom Perrizo 21 <p>Origin</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Post #24 10 The American Legion 2 The Department of South Dakota .. 6 <p>Past Commanders Night 44</p> <p>Photos</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Al Sebert 21 Dale Strom 24 Earl Schultz 26 Gary Warne 26 Gene Schumacher 22 Greg Vande Kamp 23
---	---

Paula Beckler	25	horse racing	33
Rich Kezar	22	Sidney L Smith	
Sam Olson	20	Biography	12
Sid Beckler	23	VAVS	
Steve Nemmers	20	Coalition to Salute America's Heros	
Tom Gohn	24	43
Tom Perrizo	21, 25	Veterans Day	41
Public Relations		VRE	39, 40, 44, 47
Girl Scouts	32		
Gypsy Day	40		

3x5 Card, for inside of the front cover

Charles Dale Strom
Post Historian

115 N Kline
Aberdeen SD, 57401