



MANITOWISH WATERS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

November 2023

Honoring Our Veterans



In anticipation of Veterans Day, we're dedicating this edition of our newsletter to the women and men from the area who have served our country in the military. We share with you a few of their stories, including those of some of the 159 listed on the monument at Pine Lawn Cemetery. Those 159 represent every war or conflict starting with the Civil War. If you have a story of a veteran with ties to the Manitowish Waters area, please share your story [here](#).

We thank all who have served.

Wars/Conflicts Represented in Pine Lawn Cemetery

Civil War – 1 veteran
Spanish American War - 1
WWI – 22
WWII – 81
Korea – 21
Vietnam – 11 (1 MIA)
Afghanistan – 1
Iraq - 1

Some whose names are on the memorial served during peacetime.

The Manitowish Waters Historical Society will hold its
Annual Meeting and Elect Officers for 2024

December 12, 2023 10:00 a.m. at Koller Library

All members of the MWHS are invited to attend and participate



Frank DiLeonardi

A Word From Our President

Members and Friends,

We're happy to honor our veterans with this issue of our newsletter as we pivot into November, Veterans Day and the holiday season. We hope you enjoy the stories on just a few of those who have served our country. We are interested in hearing the stories of other veterans as this is a new area of focus for us. Feel free to let us know if you have a story to share. If you want to read additional archived records of other military service, click [here](#), hit key word search, and type in "military."

We continue to make progress on our strategic plan with the most notable evidence to you coming through our expanded webpages on our [website](#) as well as additional YouTube videos and podcasts. Check them out [here](#) as you sit in front of the fireplace this winter!

As we move into winter, it also means the start of our **Zoom season**. Once again, we plan to bring you

three programs, which are listed below. I'm also happy to share that early next year we will be conducting our first survey to get your views and input on all things MWHS to date and moving forward. We're looking forward to hearing from you.

We will hold our annual meeting at 10 am, Tuesday, December 12th at Koller Library. Please join us. And, if you have any nominations for our board, please contact our nominating chair John Hanson at townchair@mwtown.gov.

Finally, we are happy to announce that **Jim Bokern** has been awarded the **Fixmer Award** from the Forest History Association of Wisconsin. Congratulations, Jim, you make us proud!

Sincerely,


Frank



MWHS Winter ZOOM Series

All start at 7 pm Central Time

December 19, 2023

Frances Badger, Muralist and Artist

presented by Kay Krans

February 13, 2024

Moonshining in the Northwoods

presented by Jim Bokern

April 23, 2024

From Win-Mar to the Pea Patch: Celebrating 100 Years

presented by Jim Bokern

Earliest Pioneers' Military Service

By Jim Bokern

Civil War veteran **Dan Devine** was one of the Northwoods earliest settlers. He and his wife **Kate Scott** raised the first pioneer family in what will become Manitowish Waters. Importantly, six of Dan's and Kate's sons served in WWI.

In 1862, Devine enlisted in the Wisconsin 23rd Infantry Regiment that fought in the western theater of the Civil War. Devine was wounded at the highly successful Battle of Jackson in May of 1863, which helped stop Confederate logistical support to Vicksburg along the Mississippi River. Many scholars believe the fall of Vicksburg was the critical turning point for western Union Army operations. Despite his wounds, Devine served until the end of the war and mustered out as a first sergeant in May of 1865.

Upon returning to Wisconsin, Devine worked near Portage, Wisconsin as a government surveyor, trapper and fur trader. By the 1870s, he moved to Lac du Flambeau and worked as an Indian Agent. Tribal member Kate Scott and Devine soon fell in love, were mar-

ried in 1879, and in a few years, moved to the Manitowish chain of lakes. Leaving his role as an Indian Agent, the Devines first lived on Rest and Spider lakes before the Devine homestead was established on the northern shore of Clear Lake. Dan and Kate often followed Ojibwe seasonal practices, created several businesses, and raised nine children.

Family instincts from both Kate's Ojibwe traditions and Dan's Irish roots instilled a strong sense of military service. When calls for WWI enlistment went out, six of the Devine's seven sons stepped up to serve. *The History of Lincoln, Oneida, and Vilas Counties* reported that the seventh son tried to enlist but was too young to serve. In 1919, the *Madison Capital Times* reported that two of the Devine's sons ultimately made it to



From left to right: Tom, Paul, John, William, Daniel Jr., James and George, sons of Kate and Dan Devine

France as part of the American Expeditionary Force.

These early Manitowish Waters pioneers were dedicated to serve their nation, first by Dan helping to save the Union and later the Devine's sons joined to stop the aggression of the Central Powers.

Honoring Those Who Served



Morill Worcester

By Jim Bokern

In 1992, **Morill Worcester**, a wreath maker in Maine, had a surplus of 5,000 evergreen wreaths at the end of the Christmas season. Rather than destroy the extra wreaths, Worcester decided

to donate the wreaths to Arlington National Cemetery to place at the gravesites of our nation's heroes, thereby starting a national movement to honor veterans.

From humble beginnings, Worcester's generosity inspired others to join in, and by 2007, **Wreaths Across America** was created as a non-profit. Today, over 6,000 *Wreaths Across America* groups deliver over 350,000 wreaths to 3,800 cemeteries, including locations in 17 foreign countries where U.S. soldiers are buried.

Manitowish Waters resident and veteran **Al McNichol** is leading a grassroots effort to sustain a *Wreaths Across America* group to honor our local veterans. McNichol and his team have identified 145 veterans buried at Manitowish Waters' Pine Lawn Cemetery that should be honored every December with an evergreen wreath. Donations of \$17 can purchase a single wreath, and if two wreaths are purchased, the third

wreath is free. For instance, a \$170 donation delivers 15 wreaths to honor U.S. veterans. Because of the Northwood's snowfall, McNichol's group has fashioned special stands to elevate the wreaths.

December 16, 2023 has been designated as **National Wreaths Across America Day**. To learn more about the program and to participate, you can visit <https://www.wreathsasscrossamerica.org/>.



Brunner's Adventure of a Lifetime



Ann Brunner (third from the right) arrives with her unit in Alaska.



Ann Brunner on far right

By JoAnn Miller

Ann Startz Keller Brunner grew up in Manitowish Waters and proudly served her country during WWII with the U.S. Coast Guard.

The Coast Guard Women's Reserve was commonly known as the SPARS, an acronym for the Coast Guard motto "Semper Paratus—Always Ready." During WWII, 10,000 women joined the SPARS and took on jobs as officers, seamen, clerical workers, logistics specialists, photographers, parachute riggers, air traffic controllers, and radio operators. They earned the same pay while doing many of the same jobs as Coast Guard men, and it freed the men to go to sea.

We never knew exactly why my mother chose the Coast Guard, but in September 1943, off she went on the adventure of a lifetime and a commitment to serve for the duration of the war plus six months. Mom boarded a train in Manitowish that took her to Palm Beach, Florida and The Palm Beach Biltmore Hotel, which had been repurposed as the

SPARS barracks and training location. The "indoctrination" process was designed to teach the women to follow orders and obey military discipline. They learned Coast Guard history and protocol; they also underwent physical training and did drills. The SPARS had to adapt quickly to military discipline—including marching to and from the nearby beach where they conducted drills. Their navy blue uniforms were designed by Mainbocher as a nod to helping retain their femininity. According to mom, the women enjoyed all that sunny Palm Beach had to offer when they were off duty. Coming from the Northwoods of Wisconsin, it wasn't a bad place to be during the winter of 1943-44.

As a Yeomen 2nd Class, she was assigned to clerical and administrative duties. Her next assignment sent her to the Toledo, Ohio shipyard where the Coast Guard ice breaker Mackinac was being built.

In May 1945, my mother returned to Manitowish Waters for a two-week leave and then headed to

her new assignment in the Territory of Alaska. She was one of 200 women sent to Ketchikan where she stayed until all SPARS were demobilized in 1946. This last assignment turned out to be a wonderful, exciting experience that created lasting memories and stories. She was very proud of her service, was active with the American Legion Post 424, and marched in Manitowish Waters' Memorial Day parades for many years.

Many SPARS, including my mother, would have preferred to remain on active duty after the war, but the women's reserve branches of all the services were disbanded. In 1949, the Women's Reserve was resurrected but did not actively recruit. In 1956, 21 women were serving in the Coast Guard Reserve, and there was no further systematic effort to recruit women until the 1970s when women were admitted into all of the U.S. Armed Forces.

Palmer Hanson's Service to the Country

By John Hanson

Palmer C. Hanson was born in the town of New Hope, Wisconsin (east of Stevens Point) on March 15, 1895. I don't have any record of where he attended grade school, but his high school years were spent at the Scandinavian Academy, "a Christian School for Boys and Girls" in Scandinavia, Wisconsin.

I have a letter he wrote to the Adjutant General of the Army on February 3, 1915, in which he asked for "information available regarding examination for appointment as a cadet to West Point Military Academy." I do have an envelope from the War Department Adjutant General's office dated February 26, 1915, that must have been a response to his request, but there's nothing in the envelope.

Whatever the results were of that exchange, on June 4, 1918, his father **Peder Hanson** had to sign an Age Certificate, verifying his age so he could join the Navy, which he did shortly thereafter. He received his basic training at Great Lakes Naval Station in Glenview, Illinois. He was classified as a Carpenter's Mate.

He was assigned to the **U.S.S. Mobile**, which may be the earliest version of a ship with that name. If you Google the name now, you will find modern ships with that name. On July 3, 1919, the crew of the U.S.S. Mobile sponsored a ball at the Hotel Pennsylvania. I have his dance card from the evening, and it only has one name on it, **Mildred Rodenhauser** from Nanuet, New York. That is not the Mildred who was our mother.

The ship sailed to Europe. They stopped in France, and he had a five-day pass to Paris during which he picked up memorabilia, including a couple of German bayonets. The



The U.S.S. Mobile transported Hanson to Europe.

next stop was London where he had another five-day pass from December 23-28, 1918. The place to hang out was "The Hut," which was a club run by the YMCA for service men. In his collection of memorabilia, there is a pamphlet, featuring **Rudyard Kipling** who appeared there.

He was honorably discharged from active duty in June of 1920 to the U.S. Naval Reserve Force. I have a letter he received from the State of Wisconsin, which gave him a bonus under provisions of Chapter 667, Laws of 1919. He must have spent the bonus as there was no check in the envelope.

He moved to Wausau where he met and married **Mildred Bielke**, who became the mother of three boys and a girl. In 1924, they came to the town of Spider Lake, and that winter, he and his crew built the lodge for **Henry and Ruth Voss**. The rest of the story will wait for another time.

The American Legion and Our Local Post

By Kay Krans

The National American Legion began in 1919 as a fraternal organization for those who served in World War I. Still today, local posts of the American Legion help with veteran needs, work on community service projects, and promote patriotism. Projects have included providing care packages for soldiers in the field, helping homeless veterans, raising money through the sale of poppies, conducting military funeral rites for servicemen, representing branches of the military in parades, and sponsoring school oratory and written competitions on citizen topics.

The **American Legion Post 424** began in the garage of **Edwin Hunter** in what was the town of Spider Lake (today Manitowish Waters) on October 18, 1930. Fifteen men gathered and became charter members, including **Cap Smith** and **Louis Laffin**. There is evidence of future installations of officers taking place at the Tower Tea Room (today Anglers) in January of 1940.

The first name given to the post was Land O Lakes Post 424; then it was changed to Manitowish Waters Post 424;

and today it is named the Northern Lakes Post 424. Hunter was installed as the first commander, and other officers were from Winegar, Winchester, Manitowish and Mercer. Subsequent commanders were **Palmer C. Hanson**, **Louis Laffin** and **Howard Pukall**.

The American Legion Auxiliary supports the Legion on projects and maintains military graves with wreaths or plants. Around the same time that Post 424 was created, the local American Legion Auxiliary was formed, and some of the first officers were **Margaret Mayer**, **Lorraine Sells**, **Marie Pepowski** and **Minnie Lange**. **Mildred Hanson** and **Clara Laffin** led the organization in later years. There were 42 charter members, one of which was a Gold Star mother, **Octavia Brunell**. The early meetings were held at the Manitowish Waters Town Hall and the community centers in Winchester, Winegar and Mercer.

By 1952, there were 122 members of Northern Lakes Post 424, and the Post began meeting in Mercer, which became the permanent home when property was purchased by the organization. One very active leader for the Northern Lakes Post 424 continues to be **Betty Snyder** of Mercer.

Profile: U.S. Air Force Staff Sargent Beth Kebl, 1965 – 1972



Contributed photograph

Beth Kebl, then U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Beth Chamberlain, at her desk in the early 1970s.

She left Randolph AF Base and moved to Mather AF Base in California, with the same job as at the ATR – moving people.

Given the intensifying Vietnam situation, the responsibility of sending people there and watching the arrivals of returning wounded soldiers and war dead was tough on Beth. Finally, in 1973 after seven and one-half years of serving her country, she decided to return to civilian life. Before leaving the Air Force, she was able to take advantage of training being offered in the dental field that helped her find work in Wisconsin Rapids.

Beth moved to Manitowish Waters in 1982 and has actively supported the American Legion Post 424, marching with parade honor guards, and in other community affairs. Most important to her has been her role as a Guardian on several Never Forgotten Honor Flights to Washington D.C., as well as volunteer work to support the flights. In 2014, she accompanied local Korean War veterans John Michaelis and Gene Hickey, also pushing a wheelchair with honorary plaques and photos of several deceased WWII veterans that included her father and my mother, Ann Brunner.

On April 17, 2023, a Never Forgotten Honor Flight left Central Wisconsin Airport with Beth onboard, this time as one of the veterans being honored. She found the experience “kind of overwhelming.”

By JoAnn Miller

After graduating from high school, Beth Kebl began her military career in Texas with basic training at Lackland Air Force Base. Her next assignment was to the Amarillo Air Force Base, which housed most of the AF career training facilities. The Amarillo base was scheduled to close in 1968, meaning all Air Force personnel and facilities had to be relocated to other bases. Headquarters dispatched orders for reassignment, and Beth was responsible for contacting individuals and getting them moved to new state-side or overseas locations. She was one of the last 10 people to leave Amarillo.

Her own relocation was to the AF Air Training Command (ATR) at Randolph AF Base near Universal City, Texas. Vietnam was heating up, and it was an uneasy position for her to be in, moving enlisted personnel and pilots to support that effort – about 10,000 per month. A few years later, she accepted an opportunity to relocate to Saigon, but her brother was a US Army aircraft inspector in Phnom Penh, Cambodia so she wasn't allowed to go to Vietnam.

Help Wanted!

The MWHS is seeking assistance with

- digital archiving
- video production
- migrating content to YouTube



Will pay up to \$22 an hour. Please contact Jim Bokern at jimkb@aol.com if interested.

Hometown Hero Roy Jacobson



In 1980, Roy and his family moved back to Wisconsin where he joined the DNR, serving as Deputy Director Northern Region and Assistant Director, Office of Environmental Law Enforcement. As a Special Conservation Warden, he was responsible for Wisconsin's first felony conviction for an environmental crime. He also provided training for foreign environmental enforcement programs and trained Vietnam's first game warden.

In 2001, Roy retired as a Ranger Supervisor for the Northern Highland American Legion State Forest. He remained active in retirement as a guest instructor at the U.S. Army Special Warfare Center and School and at Gogebic Community College. Beginning in 2005, he was responsible for organizing and mailing more than 135,000 packets of donated vegetable and melon seeds to Special Forces A Teams in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Roy's book *"Hai Si"* was published in 2010 and is the story of his Special Forces A Team experience from 1964-1966 at Ben Cat in Vietnam (available on Amazon).

He was a member of VFW Post 9536, Mercer; the Ironwood American Legion Post 5; and the National Eagle Scout Association.

Roy Jacobson was a hometown hero who left us too soon in 2012.

By JoAnn Miller

Roy Leslie Jacobson, a graduate of both Manitowish Waters Grade School and Lakeland Union High School (1961), was raised to believe that service to your country was important. Roy's too-short life reflected what he believed.

He enlisted in the U.S. Army and volunteered for Special Forces. As a Green Beret in Vietnam, he was commended for heroism in ground combat and earned the coveted Bronze Star for Valor in 1965.

Leaving the U.S. Army, he was employed by Air America and the CIA, operating Hmong and Lao commando teams throughout Southeast Asia. Roy earned a bachelor's degree at UW-Superior and a master's degree in boreal ecology from the University of Alberta in Canada. He then worked as an ecologist and game warden in Canada in the Yukon and Northwest territories, living and traveling with Eskimo and Dene hunters. Roy wrote 12 publications on boreal and cultural ecology that are used by the Canadian Wildlife Service.

Cited in Viet Nam

MANITOWISH WATERS — Sgt. Roy L. Jacobson, son of Mr. and Mrs. Leslie Jacobson of Manitowish Waters, has been awarded the Bronze Star with a V insert "for heroism against a hostile force" in Viet Nam.

Sgt. Jacobson, a 1961 graduate of Lakeland Union High School at Minocqua, is a member of the U. S. Army Special Forces.

The citation noted that Sgt. Jacobson after a large Viet Cong force attacked a village his unit was occupying organized an orderly withdrawal and set up a defense perimeter. "During the fierce battle Specialist Jacobson moved into the direct fire of the enemy to rescue two seriously wounded soldiers," the citation said.

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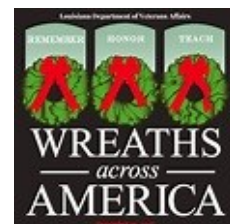
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Any questions or comments on our newsletter can be directed to **Jean Bettenhausen** at jmcbett@gmail.com or **Frank DiLeonardi** at fdileonardi@icloud.com.



Service men and women donating wreaths in a cemetery for Wreaths Across America. See the article on page 3.



Don't Forget to RENEW your 2024 dues!

Membership & Donations

Donations

Donations may be sent to:

Manitowish Waters Historical Society
P.O. Box 100
Manitowish Waters WI 54545

MW Historical Society is an approved 501c3 charitable organization, and contributions may be tax deductible. Please contact us for additional information.

Those interested in joining the MWHS should complete the form below and send in your form with \$20 to:

Manitowish Waters Historical Society
P.O. Box 100
Manitowish Waters WI 54545

Those considering joining the Manitowish Waters Historical Society are encouraged to explore our web page, attend MWHS events and reach out to board members.

Student Memberships are available for \$2, renewing each May.

Name: _____

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Thank you for supporting the Manitowish Waters Historical Society.
Memberships renew each January.