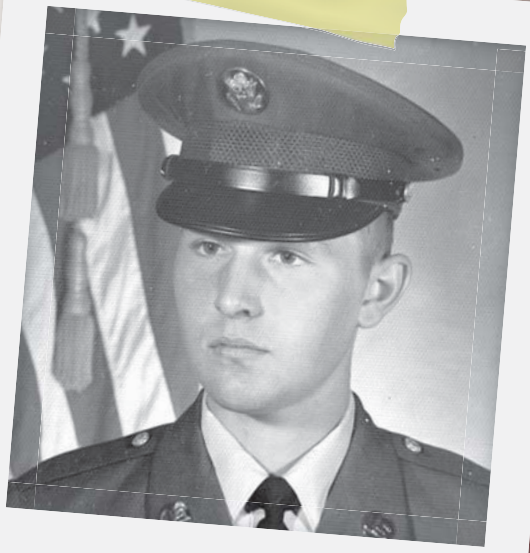




TRIBUTE TO SERVICE

Tribute to Service honors the veterans whose courage, sacrifice and dedication have helped shape our nation. Through their personal stories, the Northern Sentry recognizes the men and women behind the uniform—neighbors, friends and community members whose service deserves to be remembered and celebrated.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to the veterans who shared their stories and the local businesses who helped make this tribute possible.









4 BEARS CASINO & LODGE

northern sentry
MINOT AIR FORCE BASE NEWSPAPER
WWW.NORTHERNSENTRY.COM

GRAND OPENING

VETERANS DAY
NOVEMBER 11TH

GRAND OPENING HOURS
2:00-8:00 PM

RIBBON CUTTING
2:30 PM



Join us for our ribbon-cutting celebration!

WE'RE GIVING AWAY 50 FREE B-52 BURGER MEALS

including fries and a soda, to guests attending the ceremony.

First come, first served. One meal per person, max two per household.
Guests must be present to receive a meal ticket.
Dine-in only.



MINOT, ND

THE BUNKER

BAR & GRILL

NEWLY REMODELED



GREAT NEW MENU



SERVING THOSE WHO SERVE

Especially Welcoming Veterans, Active Duty
Military Personnel & First Responders

15% DISCOUNT

HOURS

Monday-Thursday	11:00 AM-10:00 PM
Friday-Saturday	11:00 AM-11:00 PM
Sunday	11:00 AM-10:00 PM

WWW.BUNKERBARGRILL.COM

2110 Burdick Expressway East, Minot, ND

What Does it Really Mean to Thank a Veteran?

FATIMZAHRA ELBOUAB, NORTHERN SENTRY CONTRIBUTOR

"Thank you for your service."

It's something we hear spoken to veterans and active-duty service members alike. In fact, many of us have probably said these words to someone else at least once in our lives. The phrase is simple, familiar, and well-intentioned. Yet, how can such a short phrase express all the gratitude we feel toward those who have served our country? And how do we demonstrate that we truly appreciate the people we honor, beyond these words?

Every November, Veterans Day is a day dedicated to recognizing the men and women who have served in the United States Armed Forces. This day also gives us the opportunity to reflect on these questions. But the meaning of Veterans Day extends beyond a date on the calendar. It makes us think about what gratitude looks like, what it asks of us, and how we can carry it into our everyday lives. Perhaps thanking a veteran begins with those familiar words, but it shouldn't have to end there.

Throughout American history, generations of service members have answered the call to serve, from the American Revolutionary War and the Civil War to the World Wars, the Korean and Vietnam Wars, the conflicts in the Persian Gulf, Afghanistan, and Iraq, and other periods of military service. Each generation has its own history, shaped by the circumstances of its time. By remembering this history, we're able to understand the nation we've inherited. It also reminds us that history isn't just made up of dates, battles, and names alone, because behind every historical account are individual human lives.

Every veteran has a story, whether we know it or not. They have experiences they've shared openly, memories that stayed private, and even lessons that took them years to understand. They've formed friendships, carried responsibilities, and experienced moments that became an integral part of their lives. However, military service affects more than service members themselves. It also affects families who may experience separation, uncertainty, relocation, and the challenges of adjusting to life. Each experience is different for each person, and no single story can fully represent every veteran. Nonetheless, each person's experiences deserve to be recognized in their own right.

It can be easy to look at a uniform and only see the role someone fills. But beneath the uniform is a person with a family, a history, hopes for the future, and a life that extends far beyond their military service. While some veterans look back on their time in the military with fondness, others carry difficult memories and complicated feelings. Many might experience a mixture of both. Recognizing veterans means making room for these individual experiences rather than assuming we already know what their service meant to them.

This is one reason why listening matters.

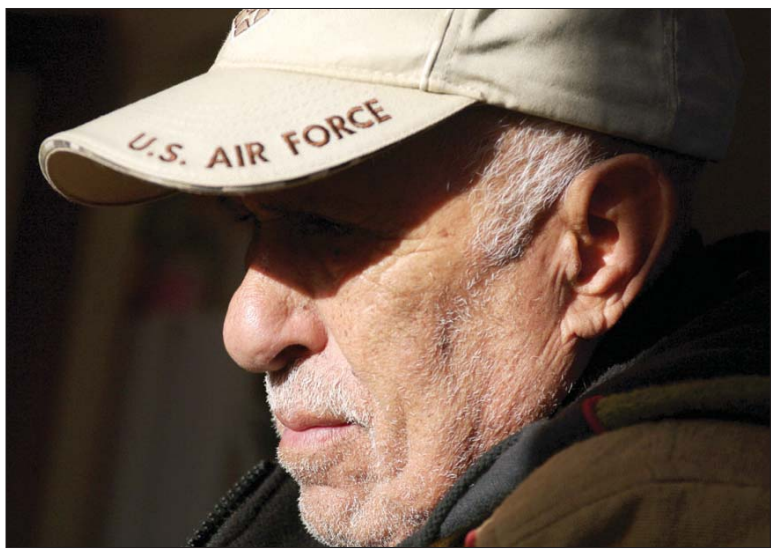
In textbooks, we learn about wars through mainly timelines and historical events. Although these accounts are important for understanding our past, they can't always capture the personal perspective of someone who experienced military life firsthand. A conversation with a veteran can bring history closer to home. It can help us understand not only what happened, but how people experienced it and what they learned.

This Veterans Day, consider taking the time to speak with a veteran, whether that person is a family member, a neighbor, a colleague, or someone you met at a community event. Ask about their experiences if they're comfortable sharing them. Listen without assuming what their answers will be, and allow them to decide which parts of their story they wish to tell.

We should also recognize the importance of preserving firsthand accounts. As generations pass, opportunities to hear directly from those who have witnessed certain periods of history become fewer. Recording oral histories, supporting local historical projects, and encouraging conversations between generations can help make sure that such experiences aren't reduced to a few paragraphs in a textbook. The stories of veterans can offer future generations a deeper understanding of history and service. Listening to these stories is a way to help the lessons of the past remain meaningful in the future.

But what happens when Veterans Day is over?

On November 11, communities across the country gather for ceremonies, display flags, and take time to recognize veterans. These traditions give us the opportunity to pause our busy lives and acknowledge people whose service deserves recognition. But a single day can't contain the full history of military service, nor can it encompass every experience and contribution of those who have worn the uniform.



Proudly wearing a U.S. Air Force hat in support of his son, who serves in the Air Force.

FATIMZAHRA ELBOUAB PHOTOS

Our appreciation shouldn't disappear when the ceremonies end and the flags come down. We can continue learning about military history throughout the year and make an effort to understand the experiences of the people in our own communities.

For those of us who haven't served, we may never fully understand what military life has meant to another person. But we can choose to remain curious, to listen with respect, and to acknowledge that the freedoms, institutions, and communities we value have been shaped by generations of people who have contributed to our country in different ways. We can learn from their experiences.

In all, thanking a veteran doesn't have to be a grand gesture or a perfect set of words. Sometimes, a sincere expression of gratitude is enough for that moment. Sometimes, appreciation may look like listening to a story or supporting a family. What matters is that our gratitude is genuine and that we don't mistake the words themselves for the entirety of what we wish to express.

Veterans Day reminds us that remembrance is a responsibility shared across generations. The veterans we recognize today have experiences worth preserving, perspectives worth hearing, and lives that deserve to be acknowledged beyond a single holiday. By taking the time to learn, listen, and remember, we can give greater meaning to a phrase that is so often spoken and, perhaps, too rarely considered.

"Thank you for your service."

These words might be simple, but the gratitude behind them doesn't need to be. This Veterans Day, let us take a moment to consider the histories they carry and the many ways their lives have intersected with our own. Let us honor veterans not only through what we say on November 11, but through our willingness to remember their contributions and appreciate their services throughout the year.

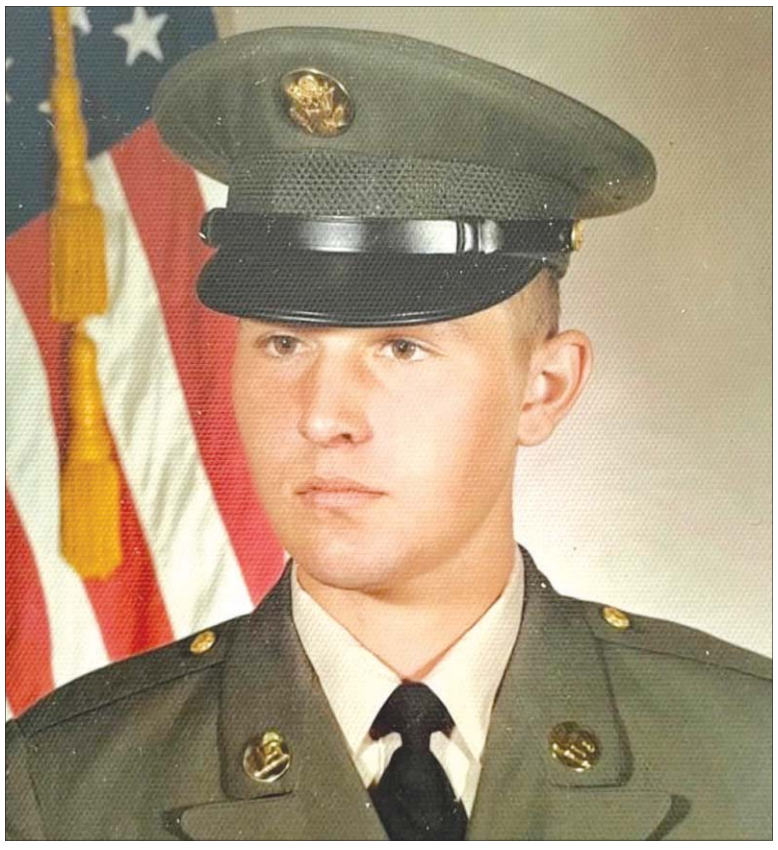
And when we say those familiar words, may we say them with a little more understanding of all that they can mean.



Soldiers participate in a historical reenactment during the Twilight Tattoo, a military pageant honoring the traditions and history of the U.S. Armed Forces.

Thank You
VETERANS
HONORING ALL WHO SERVED
Competitive Rates for
Renters / Home & Auto
Proud to Support Military Families
701 3rd St NE • Minot, ND 58703
office 701.852.4061
email Bob.Marquardt@fumic.com
Steve.Heilman@fumic.com
** Not all products are underwritten by Farmers Union Insurance **
Farmers Union
INSURANCE
www.fumic.com

We thank all the men & women
who have served or are currently
serving our country.
Verendrye
Electric
Cooperative
A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative
Offices in Minot and Velva
800-472-2141
www.verendrye.com
Proudly serving Minot Air Force Base since 1955



Bradley Morris Vigen.

COURTESY PHOTOS



A Lifetime of Service:
Bradley Vigen's National Guard Journey

JOANNE RADEMACHER, NORTHERN SENTRY CONTRIBUTOR

The year was 1974. It was the year of Watergate, Muhammad Ali vs. George Foreman, Good Times and Happy Days, Joni Mitchell and Johnny Cash. It was also the year Bradley Morris Vigen joined the North Dakota National Guard.

Brad was with his friend Robin, when Charlie, Robin's dad, asked the boys, "What are you kids going to do after high school? Go down to the armory and see Dick Wolff. Take the aptitude test and see what you can do." Charlie was a 1st Sergeant in the National Guard, so it seemed like sound advice. Brad and Robin followed through, and both soon enlisted in the National Guard on the buddy system.

A month later, Robin was sent to basic training in New Jersey and Brad was sent to Fort Leonard Wood, a U.S. Army training installation located in the Missouri Ozarks. When Brad and Robin were both home from basic training, they asked Charlie, "How is this the buddy system?" Charlie replied, "Well, that's the first lesson. Life's not fair!" Having graduated from Basic Training with Honors, Brad returned to Wahpeton joining the 816th Engineering Unit. He remained in the National Guard for twenty-six years. 1978 was a busy year for our young guardsman. As a civilian, Brad worked for Conzemius Oil in Wahpeton, North Dakota hauling fuel oil and working on heating systems. Brad took two weeks off work for Guard Camp that summer, and another week for a honeymoon when he married my sister, Jan, in October. Also, an unexpected opportunity to go to Germany on a National Guard mission came up. He got the call while at work. Brad paused the call and immediately asked his boss, "Hey, Dick, I've got a chance to go to Germany with the Guard. You going to let me off for that?" Dick replied, "You'll never be able to afford to go to Germany on what I pay you, so you better take it." A unit from Devils Lake had been asked to go to Germany in support of the full-time active-duty troops already there who needed time off regular duties for a training mission. The Devils Lake unit was short four people so Brad and another Wahpeton guardsman, Wayne, were asked to go, along with two from yet another unit. Brad and Wayne were assigned to work in a mechanic's shop. When asked about memorable moments, Brad said, "Well, being able to speak German would have been a benefit because we shared a shop with German civilians that didn't want to cooperate so they wouldn't speak English." Overall, it was a good experience that included a weekend in Paris. During the summer of 1980, Brad took a two-month civilian break from the National Guard. During that break he made the decision to continue his commitment and signed on again, staying in the Wahpeton 816th Engineering Unit. A graduate of Wahpeton, ND high school, Brad spent his first twelve years as a Guardsman in Wahpeton's 816th Engineering Unit. Some of his best memories are earth-moving projects they completed in various North Dakota locations using bulldozers, scrapers, road graders and other heavy equipment. During the late 1970's, Engineering Units frequently worked alongside the North Dakota State Water Commission, routinely activated across the state to handle infrastructure emergencies and rural civil engineering projects. One project Brad worked on was an earthen dam near Bisbee in Towner County. The 816th worked on the project for over a year, sometimes twice a month in the summer. Once the heavy equipment was there, the men were flown to and from the project by helicopter. The original earthen dam had begun to erode so they dug a large basin area and used the fill to build up the dam. Today, the Big Coulee Dam is owned by the city of Bisbee and is known as a recreation area popular for camping and fishing. Lakota began as a training project. There was a hill next to a slough, so they began by pushing the hill into the slough. It took a long time, sometimes around the clock, operating with other units. In the end, the National Guard Engineering Units built out the Lakota city airport on that site. Seeing all the work the National Guard engineering units were doing, commercial contractors formed a lobbying group against them for taking so many jobs which would otherwise be theirs. As a result, much of the publicity around some of these projects makes it a point to say the National Guard wasn't involved. Other projects the 816th worked on included building a baseball diamond in Jamestown, a walking path around a hospital in Grand Forks, covering up some dump sites, and building a rifle range on top of an older range. The unit also worked in the Devils Lake area when the waters started rising, placing culverts under roads. The 816th Wahpeton Unit eventually changed and became more about carpentry and other building skills. By 1986, the Vigen family had grown to include daughters, Katie and Laura. Seeing opportunities for professional growth, too, Brad and Jan had bought their own truck and joined the ranks of independent truckers on U.S. highways. Those opportunities also made relocation to Lincoln, Nebraska a reality. In Lincoln, Brad joined the 24th Medical Unit of the National Guard. The 24th was an air ambulance unit and Brad trained as a helicopter mechanic while there. Most of Brad's time there was spent doing routine maintenance on helicopters. They had a hangar at Lincoln airport where flights were made daily. Brad went to Fort McCoy, Wisconsin with the 24th Medical Company for a training exercise all about mobilization, getting everyone there and back. In the event of a natural disaster or other



Brad's training squad at winter survival training in Norway.






Cross country skiing at Norway winter survival training.


Troops in the snowy Norwegian mountains.



Entering Norway's Torpo Training Center.

situations when the National Guard is brought into action, many people from different jobs and locations must be coordinated and brought together in a short window of time to accomplish the mission. A great deal of planning takes place to get machinery, supplies, food, water, fuel and personnel moved into place. When traveling as a large group, planning the route, where and when to take breaks, is also a large part of the operation. In August of 1989, the Vigens moved again, this time to Princeton, MN. Brad joined the St. Cloud Transportation National Guard Unit. A highlight of his time in that unit was a two-week training exercise in Norway as part of the Norwegian Reciprocal Troop Exchange (NOREX), the longest running military exchange partnership, involving approximately 100 members of the Minnesota National Guard and 100 members of the Norwegian Home Guard. The program was established in 1974 to promote military readiness, bilateral goodwill, tactical knowledge sharing, and deep cultural understanding between the U.S. and Norway. 100 Norwegian troops train at Camp Ripley Training Center while 100 Minnesota troops are in Norway. At Camp Ripley, training for the Norwegians features weapon familiarization, tactical/urban operations, and Black Hawk or Chinook helicopter integration. In Norway, Minnesota troops are trained in Arctic/winter environments, focusing on cold-weather survival, cross-country skiing, building snow caves, skijoring, ice-water survival drills, and advanced winter warfare courses. Brad's experience took place at Winter Camp Torpo near Lillehammer, Norway while the Winter Olympics were taking place in Lillehammer. At Torpo, the Minnesotans were divided into squads of seven. The squads then worked as a team during 4 days of winter survival training which started with learning to cross-country ski, then move as a group on skis carrying all their gear, food, and supplies. Brad was very glad he had taken the time to train hard before the trip. His gear included a reindeer hide he bought from a man pulling a sleigh full of the hides for sale. The Norwegian instructors told the Americans that a hide would keep them warmer and dryer on those cold winter nights in a tent or a snow cave. They were right! Moving in their squads of seven, two led the squad breaking trail through the snow, two more pulled a sled loaded with supplies, and one was the brakeman who would slow the sled on downward slopes. The seven would periodically switch places as they progressed. At night, they worked as a team to pitch a tent or build a snow cave, start a fire, make a wind break, and heat water to make something warm to eat and drink. The rotation of jobs continued for four days and three nights of winter camping. The squads covered a long distance every day. There were no roads out there, just wide-open spaces of snow on the mountain. There were cabins all over the mountains with vacationing families in them.

Tents were warmed by a small wood stove. The stove pipes had to be cleaned out every day with pine branches so the flame would burn until morning. The squad members took turns through the night as fire guard, keeping the fire going. One night a neighboring fire guard taught them all the importance of cleaning the stove pipes. The man couldn't keep the fire going because the dirty pipe was choking out the flame. He was beating on the pipe so hard it came apart. The whole squad had to bail out of the tent and clean the pipes to start over warming it. One night was spent in a snow cave which they worked hard to build as described by Brad. "You'd start digging into the snow low on the slope, and then your entrance would be an incline, so you were going up. Then you'd make a shelf on each side where you'd sleep on the reindeer hide. The cold air would go down that entrance shoot while the warm air would stay up where you were on the shelf. The wood stoves were only used in the tents. You burned a candle in the cave, just to make sure you had enough oxygen in there. For a fresh air vent, "you'd put a ski pole in upside down, shove it through so you could reach the handle, then bobble that out a little bit." A Colonel on the trip decided he and his entourage would sleep in a snow cave, too. They commandeered the one Brad's squad had just finished, so the squad had to build a second cave for themselves. During their time in Norway, the Americans were given a tour of the King's Guard providing security for the Olympics. One group was wearing white suits camouflaged in the snow. There were Guards in plain clothes walking the streets, and others in full dress uniforms, very visible at gates and other public areas. Even the barracks had rooms for a full squad and an area for them to form a platoon. They could mobilize in minutes if necessary. Brad said the King's Guard was impressive. Overall, Norway was the most memorable event of Brad's National Guard experience. Brad went on two other training missions while in the Minnesota unit. One of them was at the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC) in Fort Polk, Louisiana. Thousands of people from National Guard Units across the country were involved, including a medical team from Hawaii to practice mass casualty transportation. They went out at night with a convoy of trucks and would come across a staged event where something had blown up or some other disaster had taken place. Some guardsmen acted as victims with injuries who needed transport. These rescues were often in the woods or in a remote location so had to be found first. Victims were then brought back to base for triage and medical attention. Brad also went on a War Fighter exercise at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. War Fighter is a simulation of a high-pressure wartime situation. The exercise was staged in an office type setting, directing activities within the exercise. Brad felt it was several layers over his head, but when he was asked to go, he agreed to. He says, "It always amazed me because it's just groups of people that you've never met before. You're thrown into a space and then you need to work together. It was very, very intense. You're sitting there and you're working with radios (computers weren't a real big thing then) but you're doing troop movements and then a supply line gets destroyed or you have to re-route. And there's a guy behind you yelling at you so it's total chaos. Now that your route's going this way, where's your food and your fuel coming from? If the troops must stop, where are they going to stop? You don't have an area big enough for them all to pull into." "At the end of the day, I saw this Colonel from Camp Ripley. I said, 'Thanks for bringing me with but I'm sorry if I blew your whole deal.' The Colonel replied, 'You weren't trained for any piece of this. You're doing fantastic. Keep up the good work.' I received a nice letter of commendation for that after the training." Along the way, Brad completed Basic and Advanced NCO courses. He moved through the ranks from enlistment E1 Private to E3 after Basic Training, E5 Sergeant, to Specialist E5 and finally, in 1997, E6 Staff Sergeant. As I have been telling this story, it has occurred to me how much Brad's career in the National Guard and his civilian career have mirrored each other. Just as his career in the National Guard moved from operating heavy equipment to transportation and mobilization of troops and all that travels with them, his civilian career progressed from over-the-road trucking to planning routes and obtaining permits for other truckers. From there, Brad and Jan opened Central Minnesota Logistics, a full-service freight brokerage specializing in over-dimensional and heavy-haul transportation across North America. After selling CML to their partners, Brad and Jan started a wheel repair business. Civilian retirement came after that business grew and was sold.

Brad Vigen retired from the Minnesota National Guard Transportation Unit on 20 June 2000 after 26 years of service. That is 26 years of one weekend a month and two weeks every summer, equivalent to 2.75 years of active-duty days. That is twenty-six years of missed weekends and vacations with his family, nearly three years of his life. Anybody who calls National Guards and Reservists "part-time soldiers" is mistaken. Even though they are not active in full-time duty, they have made a full-time commitment that can call them away from home and jobs at a moment's notice to serve their communities and country in some of the worst times in many of our lives. We owe these men and women our gratitude for their time, commitment, preparedness and readiness to protect and defend all we hold dear. On the personal side, we loved having Brad and Jan here on our farm during harvest for several years. He shared his truck driving skills getting crops to the elevators and bins while Jan helped me with support services like keeping everybody fed, running for parts and performing other "gopher" duties. I am so very proud of my wonderful friend and brother, Bradley Morris Vigen. Our family and our country is better because of his devotion to both!


The Brad and Jan Vigen family.

HONORING ALL WHO SERVED
VETERANS DAY
2026 HYUNDAI TUCSON, SANTA FE OR SANTA FE HYBRID
0% APR Financing for up to 5 years For well-qualified buyers only.
+ 0 Payments for 90 days
Photos for illustration purposes only.
PROUD SUPPORTERS OF OUR MILITARY AND VETERAN COMMUNITY
RECEIVE AN ADDITIONAL $500 MILITARY REBATE
TOWARDS PURCHASE OR LEASE
WE ACCEPT VERIFY WITH ID.ME: HTTPS://NETWORK.ID.ME/
DON BESSETTE HYUNDAI
1715 N BROADWAY MINOT, ND 701.852.3300
WWW.DONBESSETTEHYUNDAI.COM
HYUNDAI
Owner Assurance
America's Best Warranty 10-Year/100,000-Mile Powertrain Limited Warranty
Hyundai Complimentary Maintenance

Service Through the Generations

VERONICA KELLERMAN, NORTHERN SENTRY CONTRIBUTOR



Charles Kellerman began his military journey with a dream of becoming a firefighter. That dream grew into 20 years of service, brotherhood, and pride.

Military service is often described through years served, ranks earned, and places stationed, but for the families who live it, service is also found in the memories carried home, the friendships that become family, and the lessons passed from one generation to the next.

For the Kellerman families, military service is part of a story that stretches across decades, branches, and even countries. It includes Technical Sergeant Ryan Kellerman, his father, Veteran Charles Mark Kellerman, and his father-in-law, Veteran Thomas Eric Atchley. Connecting generations through a shared understanding of duty and commitment.

Their experiences were not the same. Each entered the military at a different point in their lives and followed a different path. Yet their stories reveal how the people who serve can influence those who come after them, sometimes without ever asking them to follow in their footsteps.

Today, Technical Sergeant Ryan Kellerman serves on active duty in the U.S. Air Force at Minot Air Force Base, North Dakota, as the NCOIC, Physical Security. He enlisted in 2009, but the idea of serving his country began years earlier, when he was still a child.

"I always wanted to be in the military," TSgt Kellerman said. "Growing up, I watched all the war movies and documentaries. Then 9/11 happened when I was in middle school, and I knew then I was going to join."

His father's service was part of the world TSgt Kellerman grew up knowing. Charles never pressured his son to enlist, but his experiences gave him an example of what a military career could offer.

"It played a huge part," TSgt Kellerman said. "He never pushed me to join, but he always guided me, knowing there was a better life while serving and when my career was finished."

For TSgt Kellerman, following his father into the Air Force means more than sharing a branch of service.

"Everything," TSgt Kellerman said when asked what carrying on his family's military tradition meant to him. "Being a third-generation service member, following my father in the Air Force and my grandfather in the Royal Navy, means a lot to me."

Some of the memories he carries are tied to milestones in his career. Others are found in the relationship he shares with his father.

"Seeing the pride on his face when I graduated BMT and Tech School, and all the accomplishments I've had since," TSgt Kellerman said. "Oh, and the laugh I get when I tell him I outrank him!"

The joke brings a little humor to a relationship shaped by a shared experience. For a father who once wore the same Air Force uniform, watching his son build a career of his own offers a different perspective on the life he knew.

For Charles Kellerman, military service began with a childhood dream of becoming a firefighter.

"I only wanted to join the Air Force to be a fireman," Charles recalled.

Raised in Portland, Oregon, Charles moved around the city as his father worked as a postal carrier. He graduated from Washington High School in 1978, the school's final graduating class, and went to work for an insurance company. Two uncles, Larry and Donald, who had served in the military also influenced his decision to enlist.

In June 1981, at age 21, Charles joined the Air Force. He completed his training in San Antonio and graduated in October of that year before receiving his first assignment at RAF Mildenhall in England.

While stationed there, Charles met Katherine in 1982. He was later assigned to George Air Force Base in Victorville, California, where the couple married in 1985 and are still married to this day. Charles returned to England for an assignment at RAF Greenham Common, where he served until January 1993.

Moving between duty stations meant more than packing up a home and learning a new route to work. Each assignment brought different surroundings, cultures, foods, and ways of life. Charles found that one of the most lasting parts of military service was the people he met along the way.

"Meeting new people, then having them become friends and family," he said.

Those connections became part of what he valued most about his years in uniform. He met people from across the country, learned about their backgrounds, and experienced ways of life different from his own.

But leaving the military brought an unexpected adjustment.

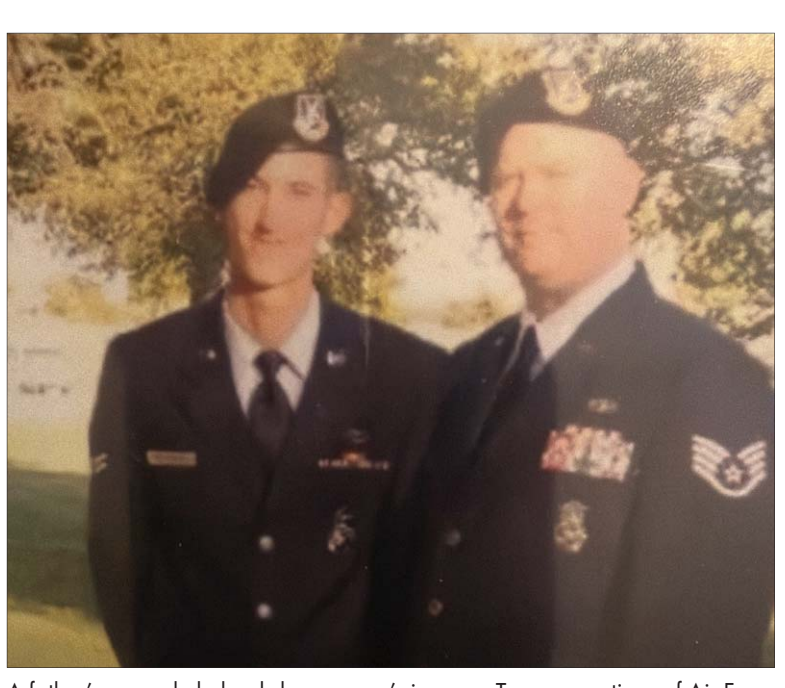
After leaving the service in 1993, Charles returned to Oregon. Without the familiar structure of military life, he found himself missing the close bond he had shared with his fellow firefighters.

"After I left in 1993, I was lost because there was no structure," Charles said. "It wasn't the same as being in the military."

The brotherhood built among his team was difficult to leave behind. As he adjusted to civilian life, his children's activities helped give him a renewed sense of home and connection.

In 2002, Charles began exploring a return to military service. With no firefighter positions available, he rejoined through the Air National Guard and returned to active-duty service in security forces. He retired in August 2010, completing 20 years of active service.

Looking back, Charles does not point to a single accomplishment as the defining moment of his career. Instead, he remembers the people he encountered and the



A father's example helped shape a son's journey. Two generations of Air Force service, connected by pride, perseverance, and a shared commitment to serve.









Thomas proudly served his country in the U.S. Navy from 1985 to 1996. His years in uniform became part of a family legacy rooted in service and dedication.



Behind every uniform is a family whose love and support become part of the journey. The values, memories, and lessons of one generation live on in the next.



Family is where the legacy begins, with lessons of respect, strength, and service passed from one generation to the next. The example set by those who came before continues to shape the generations that follow.

COURTESY PHOTOS

relationships that grew from serving alongside them.

His time in the military also shaped the way he raised his children. He wanted them to understand the importance of discipline, good manners, respect for elders, and treating others well. He encouraged them to communicate effectively, be polite, and avoid putting others down.

These were lessons he hoped would stay with his children long after they left home.

When asked what it means to see his youngest son continue the family's military tradition, Charles did not hesitate.

"I think it's wonderful, I am so proud" he said. "I've always said they should spend some time in the military. They learn so much discipline and brotherhood. I took pride in that way of life."

Charles is especially proud that TSgt Kellerman chose to enlist and pursue a military career, following in his father's footsteps just as Charles had followed the example of his own uncles.

For a parent, watching a child choose a familiar path can bring back memories of the decisions that shaped their own life. Charles knows the challenges that come with military service, but he also knows what it gave him: a sense of purpose, friendships that endured, and lessons he carried into fatherhood.

His family's history reaches beyond the Air Force, too. Charles's father-in-law, Colin Fitzgerald served in the Royal Navy, adding another country and branch of service to the family's story.

On another side of the family, Veteran Thomas Eric Atchley followed a different path into military life.

Raised in Sylacauga, Alabama, Thomas served in the U.S. Navy from 1985 to 1996. He enlisted at age 18 as a nuclear-trained First Class Machinist's Mate and left the service at the rank of E-6.

During his career, Thomas served aboard three submarines, including the USS George Bancroft (SSBN-643), a Benjamin Franklin-class ballistic missile submarine. His service also included a submarine repair tour in Groton, Connecticut.

Life aboard a submarine demanded trust and preparation. Sailors had to rely on one another in close quarters, knowing that every person had a role to play. Their training included responsibilities such as firefighting, line handling, and damage control, preparing them to respond when the unexpected happened.

Thomas learned by watching the people around him, taking lessons from both their successes and their mistakes.

"On a submarine, you learn pretty quickly that teamwork is everything. You have to trust the people around you and know that everyone is doing their job. There is a lot of training involved, and you learn from the people who have been there before you. Sometimes the best lessons come from watching what others do right, and sometimes you learn just as much from their mistakes."

Military service was already part of Thomas's family history before he enlisted. His father, Clifford Atchley served in the U.S. Air Force from 1950 to 1972, retiring as an E-8 after a final tour in Thailand near the end of the Vietnam War. His father-in-law, Frank Tracy served in the U.S. Army, adding another branch to the family's connections to military life.

Thomas's uncles, Earnest and Marvin, served in the military also. Their experiences helped shape the family Thomas would later raise and the way he understood military service.

"Military service was something I grew up around. My father served, and I had uncles and other family members who served before me. Hearing about their experiences helped me understand that serving was about more than putting on a uniform. It was about responsibility, sacrifice, and doing your part. Those family stories are important because they remind us that we are part of something bigger than ourselves."

Today, Thomas sees that history continuing through his son-in-law. His own time in the Navy gave him an appreciation for the discipline, responsibility, and teamwork required of those who serve. He recognizes those qualities in TSgt Kellerman's Air Force career.

"Ryan has stuck it out, and that says a lot about his character. Military life isn't always easy, and staying committed takes determination and perseverance. I'm proud to see him continue serving and building a career of his own."

The family's military history spans different eras and branches, from World War II and the Vietnam era to the Air Force and Navy careers that followed. Each generation faced its own demands, and none experienced military life in exactly the same way.

Yet the connections between them are not difficult to see. Charles remembers the brotherhood he found among fellow firefighters. TSgt Kellerman remembers his father's pride at his graduations. Thomas's years aboard submarines taught him the importance of depending on the people around him.

These are different memories, but each reveals something about the relationships that form through service and the ways those experiences continue to influence family life.

Not every generation has to follow the same path for a family's values to endure. Sometimes the legacy is carried forward through a shared profession. Other times, it lives in the lessons parents teach their children, the stories families continue to tell, and the example set by those who came before.

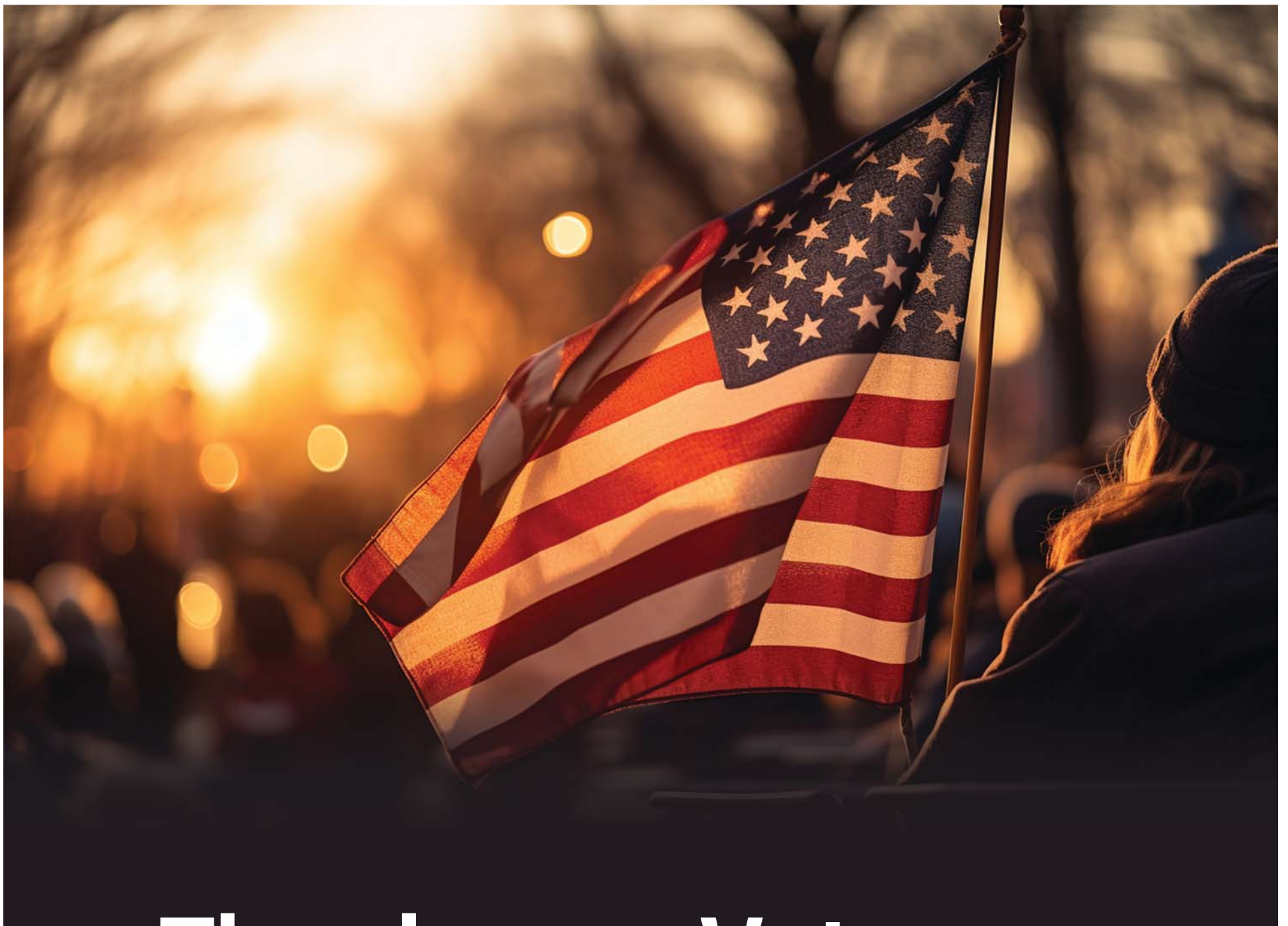
For Charles and Thomas, watching TSgt Kellerman serve offers an opportunity to see those lessons take shape in a new generation. For TSgt Kellerman, wearing the uniform means building a career of his own while remaining connected to the people whose service helped shape his understanding of duty.

At Minot Air Force Base, TSgt Kellerman continues his Air Force career, adding his own experiences to a family history that began long before he enlisted. His story is his own, but it is also connected to the fathers, grandfathers, uncles, and other relatives whose choices helped make military service part of the family's shared history.

And perhaps that is what makes service through the generations meaningful not that every person's story is the same, but that the lessons, relationships, and memories created along the way can continue long after the uniform is put away. Different generations. Different branches. One enduring legacy of service.







Thank you, Veterans

The men and women of Minot Air Force Base serve bravely and selflessly, every day. You defend our nation and protect our freedom with courage, honor, discipline, and sacrifice.

For nearly 70 years, SRT has provided communications services to Minot Air Force Base to support your mission and keep you close to loved ones, near and far. We will be here for you always, as you are here for this great nation, every day.

On behalf of everyone at SRT, we salute you.

SRT.COM

75 YEARS
A HISTORY OF INNOVATION

SRT

Honoring Veterans an Important Mission

KIM FUNDINGSLAND, NORTHERN SENTRY CONTRIBUTOR

From Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia to Rosehill Cemetery in Minot, North Dakota, the purpose of the ceremony is the same – to honor all those who have served in the military. In Minot, this year's Wreaths Across America tribute to veterans begins at 11am Saturday, December 19 at Rosehill Cemetery.

"We will have a brief ceremony to set out our ceremonial wreaths and play taps," said Robyn Stoner, Minot coordinator for Wreaths America and local Civil Air Patrol officer. "At noon we'll move indoors to Vincent United Methodist Church to get out of any potential cold weather and have an indoor ceremony. That's new this year. We're very excited about it. The Western Plains Ambassador's Choir will be singing for us."

In all, 944 wreaths will be placed on gravestones of veterans buried at Rosehill. More than 2,000 veterans whose graves are marked with ground level headstones will be honored and remembered with special crosses and wreaths placed for the solemn occassion.

"We are extending our reach in Rosehill. Those ground level grave markers will be honored in another section of the cemetery with a wreath and the name of the veteran to honor them," explained Stoner.

Wreaths Across America had its beginning in the 1990s when a company in Columbia Falls, Maine produced a surplus of balsam fir wreaths intended for the holiday season.

"That's what started this whole thing. They had the initiative to place wreaths at Arlington National Cemetery," said Stoner.

Nationally, Civil Air Patrol sqaudrons have thrown their support behind the national project. It's been an ideal fit. Patriotic youth embrace the opportunity to honor veterans while learning the importance of community service.

"For us in Minot it is a very important mission," stated Stoner. "I work with Captain Zach Haun who is the deputy commander of cadets and we both are of the same mind regarding the mission. Every veteran and their families deserve to be honored."

A number of organizations and businesses have shown their support with various donations to Wreaths Across America in Minot. One project much needed is in the process of coming to fruition – a small building to house up to 3,000 wreaths and other material needed for the Wreaths of America display. The structure is to be built near the current offices of Rosehill Cemetery.

"The City of Minot has been amazing to work with," said Stoner. "Souris Valley Ready Mix has donated the concrete to pour the pad for the shed and Knife River Corporation has donated the crew and forms to get that finished. What I've learned here in Minot is that there is a definite sense of community. I've been to a lot of places and have never really experienced this."

Stoner added that initial donations of rebar have been delivered to Burdick Job Corps and Minot North High School to their welding departments to build the crosses that will be displayed at the cemetery, but that CAP is still seeking additional help to acquire more rebar. She is grateful for all the help the program receives and, most importantly, to honor veterans and put patriotism on display.

"We don't know what it's like to wake up with the threat of bombs or war. We are so well protected, said Stoner, "Our military is everything. Without it we would not have the life we live. Period."



Iconic green balsam fir wreaths with bright red ribbons line Rosehill Cemetery for the winter months, a sight that has become a cherished tradition here in Minot.

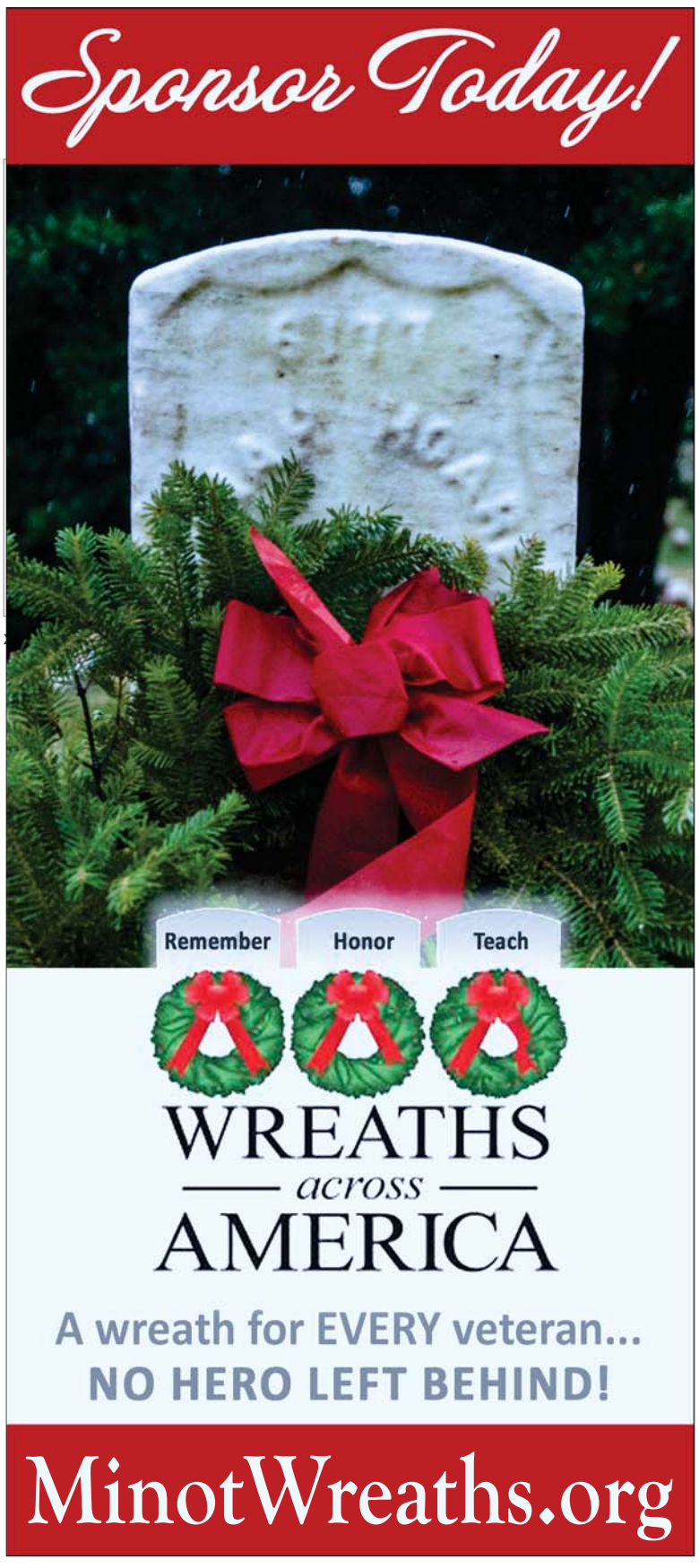


Even in sub zero weather, volunteers of all ages from across the Minot region come together at Rosehill Cemetery to pay tribute to the veterans who rest there.

CIVIL AIR PATROL MAGIC CITY COMPOSITE SQUADRON PHOTOS



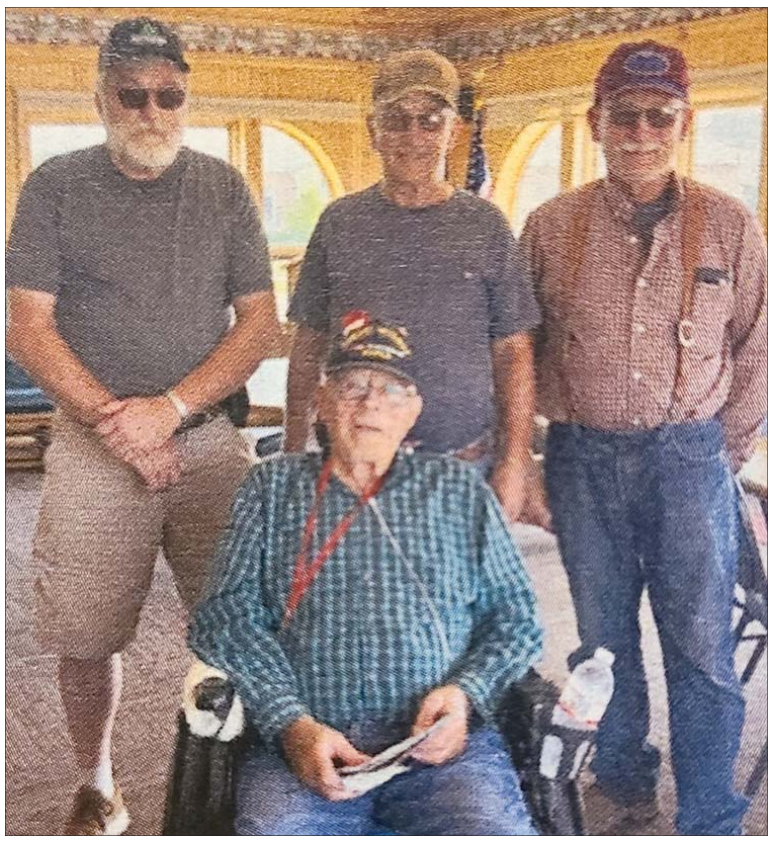
Cadet Senior Master Sgt. Jeannie DeHaan salutes a defender of American freedom as she speaks their name aloud and thanks them for their service, at Rosehill Cemetery during the National Wreaths Across America Ceremony.





Ernie Hoelscher – the Extraordinary Man

JOANNE RADEMACHER, NORTHERN SENTRY CONTRIBUTOR



Ernie Hoelscher with sons Kenny Wayne and Bruce.

Much has been written and told about Ernie Hoelscher's heroism and strength during his service with the U.S. Army in Korea. He deserves the accolades tenfold. It is not, however, the whole story. Ernie was a family man, farmer, historian, and fixture in the neighborhood. Best of all, he was our friend.

Ernest Rudolf Hoelscher was born July 24,1930 in Minot, North Dakota and grew up on his family farm in rural Foxholm. After finishing 8th grade, he worked for a few years on the neighboring Yuly farm. The Army drafted Ernie into service 23 October 1952. He spent thirteen months in Korea, completing his two years in uniform in the mountains of Colorado. While on the ship coming home from Korea, Ernie was informed his mother had died. He was able to go home to North Dakota upon arrival in California before returning for duty in Colorado. Ernie told me, "Other guys were getting out early when they got home from Korea. I don't know why they sent me to climb mountains in Colorado until my full two years were up."

He was finally able to marry his sweetheart, Shirley Wherley, on March 1, 1953. They made their home on the rural Foxholm farm and were inseparable until her death in 2023. He told me he had a difficult time transitioning back to normal life after the war. He often contemplated just walking off with his gun and ending his suffering. Then, one day, Shirley told him he needed to pull himself together because he wasn't doing either of them any good the way he was. He decided she was right and so began his efforts to live beyond the trauma of war. The farm became a place of refuge and joy as they raised their three sons and a daughter while working with horses, cattle, and milking cows.

They were both involved in their community and church. Ernie was on the board of directors for the Carpio Fire Department while Shirley served as treasurer. Ernie also joined the American Legion, first in Berthold, and later, in the Minot Post. Shirley was the Kirkelie Township treasurer for many years, and I was fortunate to serve as township clerk with her for over twenty of them. They always came to the meetings together and I so enjoyed the time I spent with them.

Ernie loved his horses. For many years, he planted twenty acres of corn on his farm with a 36" two row horse drawn planter. His draft horses, Pete and Pancho were his able partners in the endeavor.



Cavalry Company M Troopers with Ernie Hoelscher holding the flag.

Ernie spent many hours restoring antique tractors and wagons. He fully restored four or five tractors which he gave to family members when he moved to the North Dakota Veterans home in Lisbon.

He and his friend, Lee Vigestol, restored a civil war freight wagon using original blueprints from the National Archives. The surviving pieces were rescued from a pile of rubble. Ernie said they had an Amish craftsman cut the wood planks and make the wooden wagon spokes so there would be no modern cutting marks. It had to be true to the era, including paint colors, tools, and methods used. When they finished the restoration, it looked exactly as it would have in the 1860's. Ernie also became a Cavalry Teamster and was instrumental in restoring a couple of the Company's army wagons.

During the United States Bicentennial in 1976, Custer's 7th Cavalry North Dakota Memorial Regiment Company M (for Minot) was founded. Ernie included his horses in these historic activities, so it was a perfect fit for he and Shirley. Ernie rode as a mounted trooper in the early years, then joined the cannon crew as a cannoneer for about the last fifteen years.

Company M 's Kenny Yuly and Russ Volmer found an 1863 cannon barrel in a junk pile while on National Guard duty. They restored it and built a caisson (wheeled platform carrying two ammunition chests) for it. The National Guard contacted Company M, claiming ownership of the cannon. Cheryl Stein, another member, took a picture of the restored cannon and sent it to them. General Melhoff was so impressed with the restoration, he decided it should stay with



Shirley Hoelscher stitching a quilt at a Cavalry event.







Farming with draft horses.



Company M.



Ernie Hoelscher and Lee Vigestol.

COURTESY PHOTOS

Company M so gave them a deed of ownership. To fire the cannon, it was loaded with gun powder and a couple heads of cabbage. BOOM and you have coleslaw!

Shirley was active with Ernie in the Cavalry. She was a seamstress, making period costumes for herself and other ladies in the group. She showed me some of the details of those dresses. Some of them had "boning" stitched into the seams which are very stiff, unbending supports designed to hold in the waist and abdomen. I'm very glad that trend was left by the wayside! Shirley also made many quilts for family and quilt tops she donated to her church quilters for completion. Shirley was also a talented baker. Her chocolate cake was a treat, and I'm told she even made apple pie in a cast iron Dutch Oven over the campfire at Cavalry events.

Ernie was passionate in his love and respect for fellow veterans. He served on Honor Guard at over 300 of their funerals. Ever the patriot, Ernie and other American Legion members respectfully burned thousands of worn-out American flags at his farm in the fall of the year.

In the few years before moving to Lisbon, Ernie spent many a summer's day traveling the neighborhood on his trusty red four-wheeler. We all enjoyed those visits. Ernie was always cheerful, with a laugh so contagious, you couldn't help but laugh with him.

There was another side of Ernie I grew to love and learn from. He started talking about his experiences in Korea. The stories were bone-chilling and raw as he told them. I understood

how traumatized he had to be when he came home. I've often thought about how he must have struggled and what enabled him to live a full and productive life going forward.

The first thing is obvious. Shirley's love was fierce and complete. She loved him and nurtured him and their relationship, enabling them to raise three sons and a daughter while making their mark in the community. They set an example for us all.

I've experienced great loss and trauma in my own life, so I study closely the attitudes and actions of others who have gone through similar traumatic events. I want to learn and emulate the good I see in them. In Ernie, I saw his humor, humility and gratitude for every morsel of joy in his life. Through war and personal losses including an infant son, his adult daughter Sheree, young adult grandson Garrett, and Shirley, he always found his way back to a smile, giving encouragement to others with a grateful heart. I will remember how he deflected the slings and arrows of life with gratitude and that smile, his gift to us all.

So, what made Ernie Hoelscher an extraordinary man? Let's go back to his experiences with the Korean Conflict and his decision to make his life count for more than that. There was no fanfare for Ernie or his fellow veterans when they returned from Korea. Ernie was brought back to California, then had to make his own way back to North Dakota. He told me he never even got paid for his service. He also said he had been told that his chances of survival upon coming home, were greatly reduced because so many of those young men would be haunted by the memories and succumb to suicide.

The evils of war never left him. To the end of his days, the horrors returned in his dreams and stole the peace of the night. Ernie's therapy for those moments was to retreat to his recliner and snuggle under one of Shirley's quilts with one shot of whiskey. Then he could sleep.

When Shirley challenged him to start living in the present, he chose life. He could have become a bitter, tragic ghost of a man, or just ended it all. Instead, he chose to live to his potential. He chose to be a husband, father, and community leader. He chose happiness, dignity, and gratitude. Life was never perfect, and he endured more than his share of grief. He made his life the best it could be in the place that gave him peace and contentment. Ernie made the love of his family, the heart of his life.

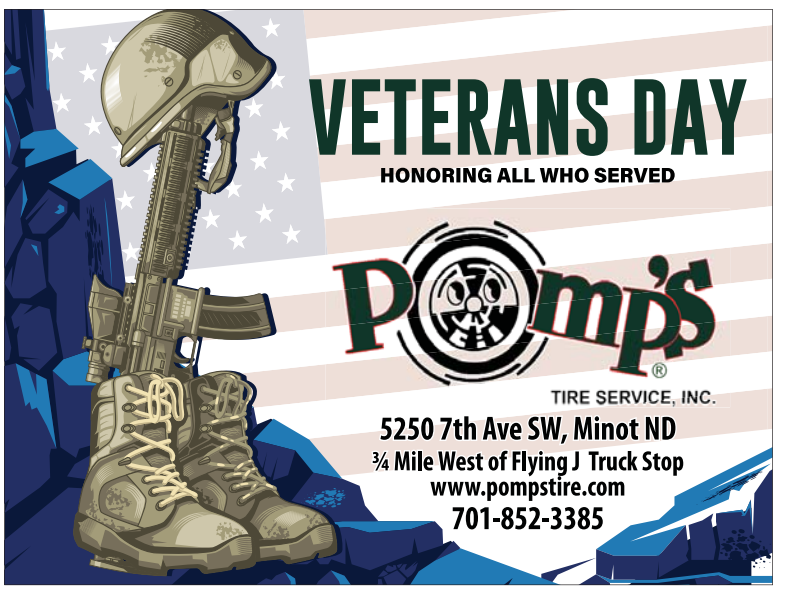
The choices Ernie made in the face of the evils forced upon him, made him a truly extraordinary man!

Writer' Note: Many thanks to Cheryl Stein for the picture of Shirley quilting and many details about Custer's 7th Cavalry North Dakota Memorial Company M.



Ernie Hoelscher Honor Guard duty.









From Hazelton to Attu: Remembering Albert "Bert" Baker

MARVIN BAKER, NORTHERN SENTRY CONTRIBUTOR

Oct. 15, 1940 was a day like any other for Hazelton man Albert Harris Baker. A day later his world would change in a very big way.

Bert Baker, as everyone called him, registered for the draft, even though the United States wasn't at war at the time. But by September, 1942, he was called to active duty and told to report to Fort Snelling in Minneapolis.

Bert, who was the oldest son of William P. Baker and Selma (Horstmeyer) Baker of Hazelton's Gayton District, went off to war like so many others following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii on Dec. 7, 1941.

Months later he found himself facing that same Japanese enemy in a place most people, including himself had never heard of until the Army sent him there.

His unit, the 50th Engineer Combat Regiment, was sent the remote Aleutian island of Attu, which is the farthest away from mainland Alaska and the closest island to Russia in the Bering Sea. The rugged-terrain island is known for cold and windy conditions and tides that fluctuate as much as 22 feet.

Attu Island was considered part of the Pacific Theater, but was the only part of that war zone that was fought in wintery conditions.

On May 11, 1943, Bert's unit started a two-week campaign called Operation Land Crab to drive the Japanese off the island they had currently occupied. Then, in the early hours of May 29, the Americans encountered a banzai attack (suicidal assault) near a place called "Massacre Bay" and Bert was one of 20 Soldiers killed that day. Thirty-five other Soldiers were wounded that same day.

At 27 years old, Bert Baker died on the last full day of the Battle of Attu. The mission was complete 24 hours later and Selma Baker received a telegram from the Army telling her that her son had been killed in action off the coast of Alaska. Her oldest son was gone and she was now a Gold Star Mother.

The story doesn't end there. A total of 549 American Soldiers lost their lives in the Battle of Attu with another 1,100 wounded and 2,100 evacuated because of disease and frostbite. And because the United States was at war on two fronts, those deceased Soldiers were buried on the island. It is estimated that up to 2,400 Japanese were killed in that same 2 1/2 week battle.

When the war ended, the Army, assisted by the Navy, began the difficult task of repatriation. Some of the bodies were sent back to their hometowns and others were interred at military cemeteries around the nation.

For the Baker family, it took the Army five years for Bert to have a proper burial on U.S. soil, as he was interred at Fort Snelling National Cemetery in Minneapolis on Oct. 26, 1948. His gravesite is No. 7698 in Section C3.

According to the National Park Service, Attu Island has been uninhabited since 2010 and is designated as a U.S. National Historic Landmark.

And to this day, the Battle of Attu is considered one of the costliest and bloodiest battles in the Pacific Theater, despite its relatively small scale. It is also notable for being the only land battle fought on North American soil during World War II.



Albert Harris Baker's official Army picture.



Bert and his sister Myrtle, taken on the family farm before he left for Fort Snelling.



Bert in Aeutians.

COURTESY PHOTOS







The Instant MP

KIM FUNDINGSLAND, NORTHERN SENTRY CONTRIBUTOR

A boy born in rural North Dakota found himself wearing the badge of Military Police. It wasn't his plan or his training, but rather a reality of Army life.

Pat Schmidt, 94, Minot, was born in New Salem, North Dakota. He attended elementary school in that rural community through third grade. Then his family moved several times as his father worked in locations from Tacoma, Wash. to northern Missouri. Through it all Schmidt enjoyed the experiences that probably helped prepare him for military service.

He was drafted into the U.S. Army in 1952 and sent to Fort Sill, Okla. for artillery training.

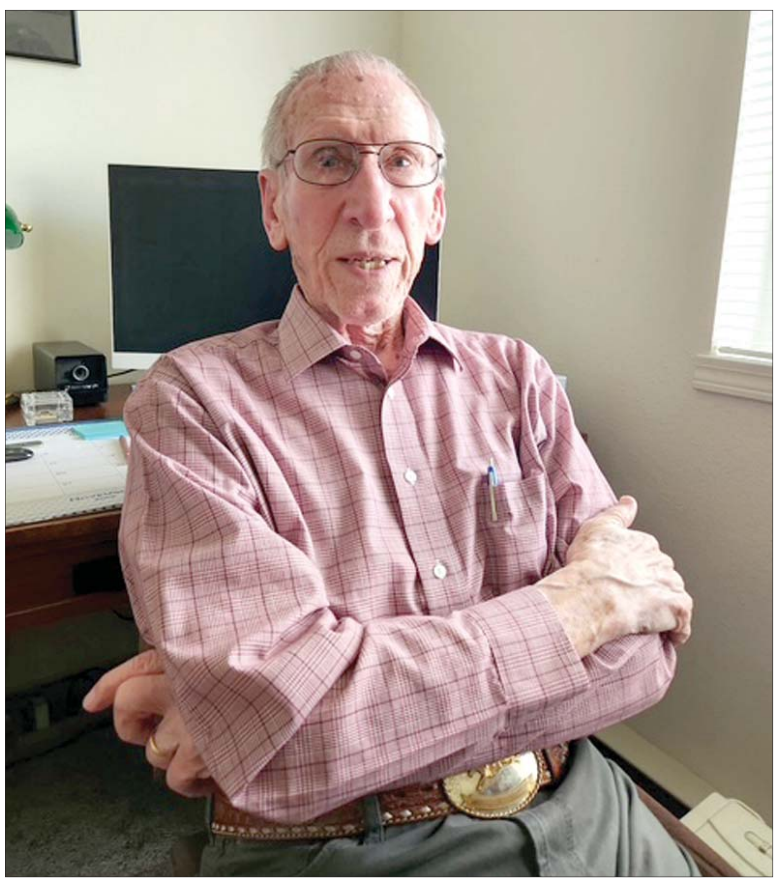
"My uncle was disappointed in me because he wanted me to be a Navy man," laughed Schmidt. "I was a little disappointed too because I was engaged to my sweetheart."

The Korean War was underway while Schmidt was training at Fort Sill, learning how to direct artillery fire over hills similar to the terrain in Korea. Upon graduating his company learned that they were to be deployed to the very land they had been training for. First though, came a two week furlough.

"With that couple of weeks I returned home, got married, and headed to a war zone," recalled Schmidt. "Our whole company was assigned to the Korea zone. We had rough seas for the 15 day trip across the ocean. We were all glad when we reached Japan."

Schmidt said he was standing in a large formation of troops when a loudspeaker announced the names of seven or eight men called to fall out of formation.

"Just like that I became an MP," said Schmidt. "I learned some tactics and wore an MP badge on my shoulder. We were kind of a special unit. We wore yellow helmets and yellow trim on our uniforms."



Pat Schmidt, 94, Army Vet

> "I really enjoyed my time. I really did. I had great officers and great leaders to work under. I never, ever had a problem working with those people."

The special unit was assigned to a small Japanese town that was filled with places for lonely soldiers to get into trouble – bars, houses of prostitution, and other assorted businesses to lure GI's.

"What an experience for this guy," recalled Schmidt. "Sometimes being an MP was not exactly fun. We raided a few houses, especially at the end of the month on payday. We walked right in on them in those houses of ill repute. Mostly we called their company commanders to come and get them."

Schmidt said he preferred a soft approach to his MP duties. If he saw a soldier without a tie or some other "little thing", he'd advise them to take care of it and walk away.

"I had options," said Schmidt. "Some MP's were more aggressive and just got guys more riled up."

Schmidt stayed at his overseas station until his discharge in 1954. He recalls a lengthy bus ride from San Francisco, Calif. to Bismarck, ND, saying he wasn't sure he'd make that trip again. However, his wife was there to meet him at the Bismarck bus stop in a brand new 1954 Ford. Reunited, he went on to obtain a teaching degree at Minot State University.

His first teaching job in Minot was at NorthHill School during its first year of operation. Shortly thereafter he left his 6th grade classroom to take a position as counselor at Minot High School. He eventually became the Director of Student Affairs for the Minot Public Schools system before retiring in 1994.

Looking back on his military career, Schmidt says he has fond memories.

"I really enjoyed my time. I really did," said Schmidt. "I had great officers and great leaders to work under. I never, ever had a problem working with those people."

When asked if his service changed him, Schmidt replied, "I think I was able to work better with more people than maybe I was working with before. I was more tolerant of the differences in people."









A Legacy of Service, Courage and Determination:

Remembering Veteran Frank LeRoy Tracy

VERONICA KELLERMAN, NORTHERN SENTRY CONTRIBUTOR

At 18, Frank LeRoy Tracy made a decision that would take him from his home in Georgia into a demanding military career, specialized training, and assignments overseas. His experiences in the United States Army included Airborne Ranger school, advanced sniper training in England, assignments in Korea and Southeast Asia, and later training soldiers at Fort Benning, Georgia.

Born on November 20, 1941, in Davenport, Iowa, Tracy enlisted in the Army at age 18. He explained that his decision to join was rooted in a desire to prove himself, and he was determined to do so. He chose a path that would challenge him in ways he had not yet experienced.

That determination shaped Tracy's military training. He chose Airborne Rangers because he believed they represented the toughest path in military service. The training pushed him to his limits, and he recalled times when he wondered whether he would make it through. Nevertheless, he remained determined and completed the training.

After Airborne Ranger school, Tracy was sent to Fort Bragg, North Carolina, where he was assigned to a Special Forces unit. He was subsequently selected for HALO training, short for high-altitude, low-opening parachuting. The technique involves jumping from a high altitude, free-falling for a period of time, and opening the parachute closer to the ground.

These experiences became part of the broader story Tracy preserved in his writing. The details he recorded offer a look at several aspects of his military career, from the demands of specialized training to overseas assignments and the responsibility of preparing other soldiers. His books preserves these accounts in his own words throughout his writings.

Although military service was a defining part of Tracy's life, his commitment to serving others continued after his Army career. Alongside his wife, Mary, he participated in community outreach through Child Evangelism Fellowship. The couple also entertained children and families as "Patches the Clown" and "Lavender Lue," including appearances associated with the Georgia National Fair.

Tracy carried that same sense of purpose into his creative pursuits. He painted beautiful, captivating artwork and wrote about his life, authoring What a Coincidence, Now They Have Drones, Magic Bullets, and the children's book A Mother. Through these projects, he continued exploring his interests and sharing his perspective beyond the military.

His legacy also extends into his civilian life through his family, community involvement, painting, and published books. Together, these parts of his story reflect a life marked by determination, service, and a lasting commitment that will be cherished.

Frank LeRoy Tracy passed away on November 11, 2025, nine days before his 84th birthday.



Frank LeRoy Tracy's life reflected a commitment to military service, community outreach, and creative expression. His legacy lives on through the stories he shared, the soldiers he trained, and the lives he touched.

COURTESY PHOTO

As Veterans Day is observed, Tracy's story offers a closer look at one veteran's path through military service and the life he built afterward. His written account and the stories he shared provide a record of experiences that might otherwise have gone untold, leaving future generations with a greater understanding of the man behind the uniform.

Minot VFW to Host Community Veterans Day Service Nov. 11

JOANNE RADEMACHER, NORTHERN SENTRY CONTRIBUTOR

The Minot VFW Post 753 presents a Veteran's Day Service on Wednesday, 11 November 2026, 11 AM at Minot Municipal Auditorium Armory.

Please join your neighbors in a celebration to honor America's veterans for their patriotism, love of country, and willingness to serve and sacrifice for the common good.

The Minot VFW Post 753 is proud to present this year's community Veteran's Day Service. They have lined up an assembly of distinguished active duty and veteran speakers and musicians to honor and thank all individuals who have served in the United States Armed Forces, whether in wartime or peacetime. Leading the Service will be Master of Ceremonies Active Duty, Staff Sergeant Robert J. Hellemn, 5 Maintenance Group at Minot Air Force Base.

The Guest Speaker of the day will be Army National Guard (CSM retired) Commander Brad Reed.

The music promises to entertain and inspire. John Young will perform "America the Beautiful" on the Bag Pipes. Brass Band of Minot will perform the National Anthem and other Military Service Songs.

Department Commander Brad Reed joined the Army National Guard in October of 1982 and attended Basic and AIT training in June 1983 at FT Leonard Wood, MO to become a Combat Engineer.

During his career, Commander Reed served as Squad Leader with A Company 122 Main Support Battalion, 3rd Armored Division in Operations Desert Shield, Desert Storm, and Provide Comfort. His additional Army National Guard State Active-Duty deployments include Flood Duty in 1997, 2009 and 2011 and Dakota Access Pipeline Protest in 2017.

Commander Reed served over 42 years in the North Dakota National Guard has been assigned to the following units: Alpha Company, 141st Engineer Combat Battalion; Delta Company, 164th Engineer Combat Battalion; 133rd Quartermaster Detachment (WD); 188th Army Band; 141st Maneuver Enhancement Brigade and last assignment as the 68th Troop Command Command Sergeant Major.

Commander Reed awards include the Legion of Merit, Meritorious Service Medal, Army Commendation Medal, Army Achievement Medal, Southwest Asia Service Medal with Three Bronze Service Stars, Kuwait Liberation Medal (Saudi Arabia), Kuwait Liberation Medal (Kuwait).

Commander Reed is married to his beautiful wife of 39 years, Sheila of Linton, ND. They have one son, Logan, and daughter in law Danni. He is a Gold Legacy Life Member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 7564, West Fargo, ND, and Department Commander for the Department of North Dakota. CSM (Retired) Reed is currently employed with Sanford Health as Manager of Athletic Training, Fargo, ND.









Color it Red, White & Blue

ROD WILSON, NORTHERN SENTRY

VETERAN'S FUNERALS ARE SPECIAL

The phone rings and the information is passed to Mark Roth, Funeral Director and part-owner of Thomas Family Funeral home in Minot. "They (the North Dakota Veterans' Home in Lisbon, ND) notified us that a Carpio area resident, Ernie Hoelscher had passed away, so the planning really starts in earnest for his funeral, even though he has been on hospice for about a year."

Thomas Family Funeral home is now in charge of the arrangements for Ernie "and the arrangements now mean a 4 and a half hour one way trip to Lisbon, North Dakota, to accept the body and bring it back to Minot." Shares Roth.

For Mark Roth, now 17 years into working with families in planning funerals for service members and veterans, the trip to Lisbon was only a small part of the details and the ground that need to be covered. "We got the call that Ernie had passed" Mark shared "I actually had a retired gentlemen that served in the Navy. In Lisbon, with the family, they do a little sendoff memorial service down there (in Lisbon). It's kind of like an honor walk. The body is draped with a flag and there is a procession to the vehicle. And then our staff member John Gross, brought him back to Minot."

FUNERAL PLANNING

In Mark's eyes, Ernie was tough. "You know, not only tough in his military service, but he was a tough North Dakota farmer, and so when he passed you kept that in mind. Ernie had been through a lot." Ernie had been part of planning his traditional funeral "including picking out the scriptures. But the family was key to planning the funeral with a very heavy emphasis on his being part of the military, because it was such a big part of his life."

In every step of the funeral planning Mark and the staff at Thomas relied on resources they had to personalize the funeral. Besides Don Gross, a Navy veteran being the person to retrieve the body from Lisbon, at the visitation before the funeral the Thomas staff that assisted was from the same area as Ernie and knew the family. "It's our job to put people in place during the funeral process that the family is comfortable with, and to tie all of these ends together from military honors which occurred at the church, because Ernie was a big part of the American Legion.

ENHANCING THE MILITARY FUNERAL

There are several contacts that need to be made to bring together resources for a military funeral "and one of the first is to contact the North Dakota National Guard to do the folding of the American flag, and they were there at the Saturday funeral to do that."

In Ernie's case, the funeral would be held on Saturday, with military rights at the church in Burlington. However, with limitation of operational hours at Rosehill Cemetery, Ernie's final resting place, the graveside service was move to Monday.

"In the planning of the funeral we used military type songs, and there were also a couple of songs that weighed heavily on military service. In the video tribute we used military music. There are the very basic things that we help with that come through the VA and those would be the flag, the stone and the opportunity for benefits, because he died in a VA facility. You put all of these things together and the make up an honoring type of service, not only for Ernie, or any other veteran, but his family. And now there are other details like streaming of the service because there were family that couldn't make it to the service. And now that service is available for people to watch on demand because the service is on our web site.



An Honor Guard is normally part of a Veterans' or an active duty military's funeral.

THE FINAL JOURNEY

Ernie was a true craftsman and over the years had re-built a Civil War horse-drawn munitions wagon. The wagon and horses were assembled and met in the Rosehill cemetery parking lot. "The family loaded from our funeral coach into the wagon drawn by a team of horses and we had a procession to the cemetery, following their loved one all the way there and that was recorded by us as well and added to that stream. We took every step to honor someone who went through quite an ordeal with his military service. Ernie told a story about his military service, and it was also in print, but it was tough for me to even read it. He was one of 3 in a platoon of 40 to survive an attack. The strength that Ernie had to survive and the struggle he went through to tell that story. It's not something we take lightly for a veteran, and not just for a veteran but for anybody. You do your best to give them what they deserve" according to Roth "and if that takes a little extra time at the funeral home after hours, or driving 4 and a half hours one way, then that's what they deserve."

A COORDINATED EFFORT TO HONOR MILITARY SERVICE

BRINGING THE COMMUNITY TOGETHER

Mark Roth is grateful for the services provided by organizations such as the local American Legion post and the North Dakota National Guard. Coordinating a military funeral brings together many contributors, including:

- Honor guard members.
- American Legion members.
- Volunteers who prepare and serve lunch.
- Church staff, including the soundboard operator and pastor.
- People who provided special care at the home.

COORDINATING THE DETAILS

Roth describes 30 or more parts that must come together within five days, with even more contributors when those who provided special care at the home are included. The shared goal is to provide the best possible service for veterans and active-duty service members.



Rosehill Cemetery in Minot.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ROSEHILL CEMETERY



ND Veterans' Cemetery adorned with Wreaths of Honor during the Christmas Season.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ND VETERANS CEMETERY

RECOGNIZING EACH PERSON'S MILITARY SERVICE

For Roth and other funeral home staff, planning a funeral that honors military service is a privilege. Because that service was—or remains—a significant part of the person's life, it becomes an important consideration early in the planning process.

Not everyone chooses full military honors, but Roth says the funeral home still recognizes that service. On its website, a flag, a flying eagle, or another tribute reflects the person's military service.

MILITARY CEMETERIES ARE AN OPTION

Final resting places are also provided by facilities like the North Dakota Veteran's Cemetery just south of Minot. "Or even the National Cemeteries like the one in Fargo and in Fort Snelling, and then of course there's Arlington National Cemetery. In Mandan and at the National Cemeteries the grounds are well maintained, they help you with a marker, and usually it's an upright marker. We are amazed that it all works like clockwork at these places. The workers are ready to go. And of course, your spouse and dependents can be buried there too."

Most private cemeteries do have special veteran's sections, but all of these options are reviewed by the funeral homes. "What needs to be taken into consideration, especially at the larger cemeteries, is their schedule of services. They are busy, and yet they want to take the time to honor each person being buried."

AN HONOR TO ATTEND

I have always considered attending a military funeral an honor. The flag-draped coffin and military honors pay tribute to the person's service to our country. They served with pride; now we can honor them with a fitting farewell.

THOMAS FAMILY FUNERAL HOME
VETERANS DAY
HONORING ALL WHO SERVED
Serving Veterans and Their Families for Over 100 Years
304 Main St S Minot, ND
701-838-2832
www.thomasfamilyfuneralhome.com

VETERANS DAY

THANK YOU

FOR YOUR SERVICE

CASINO

Mon–Thurs 8 AM–2 AM;
Fri and Sat open 24 hours;
Sun closes at 2 AM

CENTER BAR HOURS

Sun–Thurs 10 AM–1 AM;
Fri and Sat 10 AM–2 AM

POCKET ACES BAR HOURS

Sun–Thurs Noon–1 AM;
Fri and Sat Noon–2 AM

4 BEARS CASINO & LODGE
4 MILES WEST OF NEW TOWN

701.627.4018

4BEARSCASINO.COM

When gambling is no longer a fun hobby, but an addiction, know there is help. Call the 2-1-1 Hotline today for help and guidance. 4 Bears Casino & Lodge cares about you and wants you to know that help is available.