



American Legion
Department of Wisconsin
8th District Spring Conference

Spring 2016 Conference Minutes May 21 2016
Post 117, Shawano, WI

1. District Commander Jim Young called the meeting to order at 0900 hours. The colors were posted and all present rendered a hand salute. Chaplain Theama gave an opening prayer. The POW/MIA flag was placed on the empty chair and Resolution 228 was read. Legionnaires then recited the Pledge of Allegiance and the Preamble to the Constitution of The American Legion.
2. Commander Young declared the meeting open and invited Dan Seehafer to come forward. Dan spoke about his qualifications for the office of Department Commander.
3. Commander Young then asked Wayne Jensen to come forward. Wayne spoke about his qualifications for the office of Alternate National Executive Committeeman.
4. Commander Young asked District Adjutant Arien Herminath to read a statement from Robert Chappell on his qualifications for the office of Alternate National Executive Committeeman. Robert was unable to attend our Spring Conference as he had a previous engagement at Fort McCoy. Arien also read a statement from the 9th District Commander Laurel Clewell who was also at Fort McCoy, on his qualifications for the office of Department Vice Commander.
5. Commander Young invited Post 117 Commander Al Boyd forward to welcome the attendees.
6. A roll call of officers and posts was taken. All District and County officers were present or excused. It was reported that the Colby post had merged with the Unity post.
7. The Adjutant reported that the 2015 Fall Conference minutes have been available on the website for a number of months and copies were made available for perusal at this conference. He asked that the minutes be accepted. A motion to accept the minutes was made and seconded. The motion passed.
8. Commander Young introduced the guests.

9. He then introduced 11th District Commander Frank Kostka who spoke about his qualifications for the office of Department Vice Commander.
10. District Officer Reports:
 - a. Commander Young spoke about his activities during the past six months.
 - b. 1st Vice Commander Fregien spoke about his activities during the past six months.
 - c. 2nd Vice Commander Borchard was excused.
 - d. 3rd Vice Commander Jaeger spoke about his activities during the past six months. He also mentioned that only 12 posts in the 8th District attended this 2016 Spring Conference. That means 34 posts did not attend and many legionnaires did not learn about what he we do. He plans to work hard to improve this situation for the upcoming 2016 Fall Conference.
 - e. Finance Officer Jensen gave a report on 8th District finances.
 - f. The Adjutant requested that all Counties and Posts inform the Department and 8th District of any officer changes for 2016-17. He asked that Legionnaires in attendance support 8th District requests for members to attend Department program meetings and reporting back to the Caucus.
 - g. Chaplain Theama reported that his work now calls for a long commute and he will not be as available for Legion work as he was in the past. He promised to stay involved in 8th District activities as much as possible.
 - h. Historian Pope asked that he be informed of 8th District activities and promised to attend as many events as possible.
 - i. Judge Advocate Gorst spoke about events she had attended and asked that posts contact her concerning any by-law or constitution issues. She mentioned that there are resolutions before the upcoming Department Convention that may well affect our local constitutions.
 - j. Sergeant-at-Arms Klotzbuecher reported on his activities during the past six months.
11. County Commander Reports
 - a. Marathon County Commander Balz reported on her activities along with a comprehensive report on post activities. She added that while Colby post had merged with Unity post, Spencer post had been reinvigorated and the county remained at eight posts.
 - b. The Portage County report was given by a post officer as Commander Dave Vandre is suffering from a serious health issue. A report was given on activities at the Almond post.
 - c. The Shawano-Menomonee County report was given by a Post 117 officer as Commander Richard Marien is out of the country. A comprehensive report was given on post activities.
 - d. Waupaca County Commander Willis Pope gave a comprehensive report on post activities
 - e. The Waushara County report was given by Department Vice Commander Krofta. He reported on post activity and mentioned that both Waushara and Wood counties were looking for Legionnaires to fill the office of County Commander.

- f. The Wood County report was given by a Post officer. He reported on Post 54 and Post 153 activities. Former Wood County Commander Ron Miller is currently a member of King Post 161.
 - g. A motion was made and seconded to accept the above District Officer and County Commander reports. The motion passed.
12. Commander Young invited 1st District Commander Tom Strey to come forward and speak about his qualifications for the office of Department Vice Commander.
13. Commander Young invited Past Department Commander Ken Rynes to come forward and speak about his qualifications for the office of National Executive Committeeman. He presented awards to King Post 161 and the American Legion Riders for their support of past fundraising rides.
14. District Committee Chairman Reports:
- a. Americanism Jerry Krofta
This year we had one contestant for the Oratorical Contest. The contestant, Gabriel Kuma, was from Shawano County and the contest was held at King. She lost in the regionals to the eventual state champion.
 - b. Badger Legionnaire/Public Relations No report
 - c. Camp American Legion Jim Jaeger
The camp is open from May through September. A new freezer was installed thanks to the Auxiliary. New windows and their installation were donated for the lodge. Funding for new playground was donated and installation was completed.
 - d. Children and Youth Ron Fregien
He attended the January Children and Youth Committee meeting at Ho Chunk. They put out a new children's coloring book that is available at no cost for hand out at schools.
 - e. Convention Activity Jerry Krofta
He gave the locations of upcoming Department Conventions through 2021. Wisconsin is trying to host the 2022 or 2023 National Convention.
 - f. Finance David Jensen
We donated \$78.00 to the Shell Fund. He spoke about activity on the Department Finance Committee.
 - g. Fund Raising Rick Klotzbuecher
He encouraged everyone to fill out sweepstakes tickets prior to the Department Convention.
 - h. Homeless Vets Ron Miller
Milwaukee reports that they have a lot of veterans coming in with no place to live and short of food to eat.
 - i. Hospital Gary Mader
He reported on planned upgrades and work completed at King. He added that you now have to get a visitor's pass to visit patients at King. They are also adding cameras to cover activity in the buildings after normal hours of operation.

15. Commander Young had everyone stand and give General Cone a hand salute as he entered the room. He then adjourned the meeting until after lunch.

16. Following lunch, Commander Young introduced General Robert W. Cone. General Cone opened his comments by saying that his wife is from Shawano and they have a home here on the lake. He is a Wisconsin Resident and shares his time between Shawano and a small mill town in New England. He went to West Point because he wanted to go to college and it was free. General Cone started with two stories. He enjoyed meeting with his soldiers from Wisconsin and discuss Packer games, especially in Iraq around 2010. He got Antonio Freeman to come out to see his Wisconsin National Guard soldiers and visit an Iraqi training site. Antonio was firing on the range and the Wisconsin troops painted Vikings helmets on the targets. Antonio was wasting the targets and later commented that he pictured Brett Favre wearing a Vikings helmet. General Cone then commented that Congressman Paul Ryan once called him in Iraq and challenged him to take care of his guardsmen. General Cone told Congressman Ryan that his wife was from Shawano and he was a Wisconsin resident. If he didn't take good care of his Wisconsin soldiers, he would not be able to get a drink in Shawano.

General Cone then turned to five myths that he wanted to comment on from his personal point of view:

1. The belief that there are easy wars, that modern technology has somehow changed the nature of war. Nothing has changed. War is fundamentally a human struggle. Politicians do not want to hear that they cannot wage an easy war, that there will be a cost. They need the support of the Congress and the American people because we will pay for war for years and years to come. War is about land: they start on land, are fought largely on land, and are resolved on land. The only way to wage war is through strength: we need a great Army, a great Navy, and a great Air Force. If anyone tells you anything different, they are going down the wrong road. There is no magic solution.
2. That we as the strongest nation in the world can get other nations to fight our wars. He spent years training soldiers from NATO and the Middle East. The danger of training soldiers is that you never know what they are going to do. You can get them to do a few things, but then they go and do something else that is completely different. And not to sound elitist, but nobody does it like the American soldier, airman, sailor or marine. Nobody gets it done, nobody fights like we do, and nobody stays with the mission like we do. He normally met with troops as they rotated out and continually heard the soldiers thank God for being from a country where they were allowed to do the job that needed to be done.
3. Some people say we spend way too much money on defense. As a country, we decided to go with an all-volunteer force. There are 330 million people in this country and about 1% of them are in uniform. There is always a way to save money, but General Cone said if he takes your son or daughter into combat he is not looking for a fair fight. Those

kids need everything available to them that will give them an advantage. Nobody wants a big ground war. But if we decide to do it, then we owe the soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines and their parents the knowledge that it is being done right.

4. The US Military has to change to be more like industry or be like the army in some other country. Some say that we should go out and find people and put them in positions like a Gunnery Sergeant in the Marine Corps. Lets put the rank on a person without his/her having served the time. General Cone said while he is not a bureaucratic guy, he respects the rank and experiences that his people have and he would not mess with it for the world. There are proposals out there that the military take people from industry and make them generals. He acknowledged that there are problems in supply and depot areas and civilianizing those areas to a certain degree might have a positive effect. But he stressed that the problem was not in the war fighting area and that military traditions should be respected. As for our imitating some other army, General Cone said most other armies want to be like us.
5. When General Cone speaks to industry, they want him to address the millennium generation. They want to know how the services, in his case the Army, gets so much out of these kids. Some businesses are afraid to turn their operations over to this new generation because of the way they think and the things they do. General Cone said he has a very positive message about this new generation. At the end of the day what you get out of them is what you are willing to put into them in terms of training, discipline, leadership and personal example. What percentage of young people in this country between the age of 18 and 26 are fit to serve in the military today? The number when he left was 26% and he understood that it has fallen to 23%. The main problems are obesity and type two diabetes. While many have high school diplomas, when tested they can't function intellectually. As for allowing people in on waivers, giving a person with a criminal record a weapon, sending him to a foreign country and telling him to use his best judgment is probably not a good idea. We can't waiver these problems away. The politicians say lower the bar. We can't lower the bar because these soldiers are on their way to Afghanistan and will not be cut any slack or given a participation trophy. The thing that saves us is when recruits enter the army the first thing they meet is a non-commissioned officer. In school nobody leads by example, gets out there and says follow me. In the Army people meet a living, breathing, thinking example of leadership. They are absolutely fascinated. He tells a story about briefing marines that took heavy casualties on a mission. He spoke to them about our mission (in Afghanistan), why we are there, what it is going to lead to, and how it is going to be successful. General Cone stressed that military (and business) leaders are going to spend a lot of time answering the question why for this young generation of war fighters. They have to be led by action and example. He said that is how we have figured it out in the military and it works. General Cone said he

has been in some of the worst places on the face of the earth and he will tell you about this new generation of kids. They come from great stock, it is still in there. They possess the flame of the American soldier, the values are still there.

He added that we have put ourselves in a position in the world where the Russians and Chinese are watching us to see how we respond to their provocations. Putin will push us as far as he can get away with. Any decision to draw down the armed services to promote social programs is tough. We can't build up quickly from a relatively small pool of qualified young people. It is a tough time to be in the military. We are cutting units when we don't have enough of them.

General Cone also commented on the role of women in today's military. He said the military is being used as an instrument of social change. He had a lot of women in his command, particularly in the area of police training. He stressed that they earn the opportunity to serve and do not want the standards lowered. How many want to be in the infantry? Not too many, men are the same. We should let women do what they want to do, soldiers support that. He found it essential to have women available to search local women when out on patrol. The women who meet (military) standards deserve a chance equal to the men who also have to be held to (military) standards. In response to a question, General Cone said he was in favor of all young people having to sign for selective service, women as well.

17. District Committee Chairman Reports – Continued

- k. King Day Pilgrimage Jim Young
Jim gave an overview of the day's agenda.
- l. King Day Parade
An overview of units and projected route was given.
- m. Legion Riders Ray McSherry
The route of this year's Run for Pride was discussed along with the Wreaths across America program.
- n. Legislative Kathy Gorst
Kathy gave an overview of the requirements to add veteran to a driver's license. She also reported on upcoming changes to the National and Department SAL constitutions and by laws that will probably require similar changes at the Post level. She informed the Legionnaires of proposed changes by the WDVA regarding the Board of Veterans Affairs. She spoke about the Legislator of the Year nomination and selection process. She also spoke about the Policy Committee, particularly two resolutions that were brought up. One has to do with post discipline of a member and provides due process for the member in question. This information should be downloaded from the Department website. The second resolution deals with property owned by the post. Under this resolution, posts will be

unable to sell their post home or property without permission of the Department Executive Committee.

- o. Membership Darla Porter
Darla reported that 12 8th District posts had reached 100%.
- p. POW/MIA Ron Miller
Ron reported on the repatriation and burial of the remains of a long-missing MIA from Korea.
- q. National Security Jim Young
Jim reported on the recipients of Police Officer, EMT, National Guard/Reserve, and Fire Fighter of the year awards. He also reported on the Troop and Family Support Foundation.
- r. Religious Emphasis Tom Theama
Tom again emphasized that he be informed of illnesses and deaths in the 8th District. However, he encouraged those in attendance with questions to contact him and talk about life and what we have to look forward to. He would like the Legionnaires of the 8th District to utilize him as the trained minister he is.
- s. VA&R Dan Rindt
Dan spoke about some of the upgrades and donations to Camp American Legion during the reporting period. He spoke about the program to identify and provide proper burial for the unclaimed remains of Wisconsin veterans. He also addressed ongoing programs to support homeless veterans, including the growing number of homeless female veterans. Dan spoke about programs to address the growing number of veteran suicides in the state. Finally, he spoke about programs to lower the unemployment rate of veterans.
- t. SAL Dan Rindt
Dan continued with a report of SAL activities and support at the National and Department level. He focused on SAL support to Department of Wisconsin programs during the past year. Of the 5 SAL Squadrons in the 8th District, 3 are at or over 100%.

18. District Program Director Reports:

- a. Americanism and Government Testing Arien Herminath
Arien spoke about the 50-question test offered online in April of this year. The test awards \$11,400 in scholarship money to 45 high school students and is an important program that deserves to be promoted.
- b. Badger Boys State Jerry Krofta
Jerry reported on the need for more sponsors for this program. The cost per student is \$250, but donations of \$50 and \$100 are also welcome.
- c. Baseball Jim Young
He spoke about Clintonville holding the Class A tournament in 2017.
- d. Blood Doner Jim Young

Jim also spoke about the collection of 47 units of blood at the 2015 Department Convention. The next blood drive will be held at this year's Department Convention in Middleton.

- e. County Youth Government Arien Herminath
Arien reported on the 2016 Shawano County and Waupaca County programs held in April of this year.
A motion was made and seconded to approve the Committee and Program director's reports. The motion passed.

18. Old Business:

- a. Commander Young asked that all posts get in their CPR, Children and Youth and VA&R reports in by 01 June.
b. He then asked for bids for the 2016 8th District Fall Conference and 2017 8th District Spring Conference. The New London and Manawa posts volunteered to host the above conferences and will work out the details at a later date.
c. District Finance Officer Dave Jensen mentioned that posts have to pay dues based on the number of members on their roster. If a member passes away during the year, the post must still pay for that member until department takes him/her off the roster.

19. New business:

- a. Commander Young asked Gary Mader from the King Post to speak about the service medal that he was awarded for work at King Veterans Home.
b. Commander Young then spoke about 8th District support for the Department Golf Outing.
c. Ron Miller spoke about construction planned at King Veterans Home. The construction will mandate the relocation of many of the homeless veterans currently living at King. The Waupaca County VSO is working on the problem, but potential locations have to pass inspection.
d. Commander Young spoke about the Fisher House and how 90% of all money donated to this charity is spent on the kids.
e. Commander Young then asked for volunteers to serve at the Department Convention. He asked for three ballot clerks and Dave Jensen, Bill Kuehl and John Zychowicz volunteered. Arien Herminath volunteered to serve as an Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms.
f. Commander Young then asked for Committee Reps for the Department Convention. Jerry Krofta/Americanism, Ron Fregien/Children and Youth, Jim Jaeger/Constitution, Arien Herminath/Finance, Kathy Gorst/Legislative, Darla Porter/Membership, Ron Miller/National Security, /Resolutions, and Dan Rindt/VA&R.
g. Commander Young asked for volunteers to attend the National Convention. Kathy Gorst said she might go, but would not know until the Department Convention. There were no volunteers to serve as an Assistant National Sergeant-at-Arms.

20. Commander Young asked for anything for the good of the American Legion. County Commander Baltz explained how Legionnaires can support agencies that support veterans in need. She offered to serve as a contact point to bring Legionnaires in contact with these agencies.
21. Shawano Post 117 was given a warm round of applause for their hard work to make this Spring Conference a success.
22. Chaplain Tom Theama led the membership in memorial service. He called the County Commanders forward and had them read the names of the Legionnaires who passed away during the past year. A moment of silence was held, followed by a final salute. Chaplain Theama then gave a Christian blessing.
23. There being no further business to come before the meeting, Commander Young declared the meeting adjourned at 1415 hours.