



American Legion
Department of Wisconsin
8th District Spring Conference

Spring 2019 Conference Minutes May 18, 2019
Post 54 Marshfield, WI

1. District Commander Ron Fregien called the meeting to order at 0900 hours. The colors were posted and all present rendered a hand salute. Chaplain Melton gave an opening prayer. The First Vice Commander read Resolution 228 and the POW/MIA flag was placed on the empty chair. The First Vice Commander also led the Legionnaires in the Pledge of Allegiance. The Third Vice Commander led the Legionnaires in the recitation of the Preamble to the Constitution of The American Legion.
2. Commander Fregien declared the meeting open and introduced the Mayor of Marshfield who welcomed the Legionnaires. Wood County Commander Jerry Krofta then encouraged the Legionnaires to visit the new patio at Post 54. Finally, the Post 54 Commander spoke about the local Marshfield community banner program.
3. Commander Fregien introduced the guests.
4. Commander Fregien asked for a roll call of officers. Adjutant Herminath called the roll. There were 47 Legionnaires from 21 posts present.
5. Commander Fregien then called for a reading of the minutes. Adjutant Herminath said the minutes of the 2018 8th District Fall Executive Committee meeting and 2018 8th District Fall Conference had been available for perusal on the 8th District website for several months. He asked that the minutes be accepted as written. A motion was made and seconded to accept the minutes. The motion passed.
6. Commander Fregien requested a financial report. Financial Officer David Jensen presented a financial report. A motion was made and seconded to accept the report as given. The motion passed. The Shell Fund collection was taken which totaled \$217.00.
7. Commander Fregien introduced Allen Watry, Vice Commander of the Sons of the American Legion of Wisconsin for Districts 6, 8, and 9. Allen thanked the Legionnaires for their support of SAL Squadrons in the 8th District, the Josh Dog program, and encouraged everyone to continue their excellent support for the military honors program.

8. Numerous candidates for department offices were introduced throughout the day and spoke about their qualifications for office.
9. District Officer Reports:
 - a. Commander Fregien gave a short address about the status of the 8th District and reported on his activities during the past six months.
 - b. 1st Vice Commander Balz spoke about her activities during the past six months.
 - c. 2nd Vice Commander Burt spoke on his activities during the past six months.
 - d. 3rd Vice Commander Melton spoke about his activities since the 2018 Fall Conference.
 - e. Finance Officer Jensen referred to his earlier report.
 - f. Adjutant Herminath requested that all counties and posts inform the Department and 8th District of all officer election results, including non-change reports, for 2019-20. He thanked the Legionnaires for their support to the 8th District website during the past year, particularly their timely updates related to post and personnel information changes. It was mentioned that the CPR reporting link to Department was not working properly. The fact had been reported to Department and a resolution was expected soon.
 - g. Judge Advocate Gorst gave a report on her activities during the past six months.
 - h. Chaplain Melton reported on his activities during the past six months. He encouraged the Legionnaires to send him updates on illnesses or deaths.
 - i. Historian Pope said he would combine his historian report with his King Veterans Home report later in the morning.
 - j. Sergeant-at-Arms Young reported on his activities during the past six months. He also spoke on his activities as Department Representative to King Veterans Home.
10. County Commander Reports
 - a. Marathon County Commander Balz reported on post activities during the past six months.
 - b. Portage County Commander Miller reported on post activities during the past six months.
 - c. Shawano-Menomonee County Commander Marien reported on post activities during the past six months.
 - d. Waupaca County Commander Pope reported on post activities during the past six months.
 - e. Kevin Miller, Commander of Post 317, Wautoma gave the Waushara County report for the past six months.
 - f. Wood County Commander Krofta reported on post activities during the past six months.

11. District Committee Chairman Reports:

a. Americanism

Jerry Krofta

He reported that the 8th District did not have a candidate in the Oratorical Contest the past two years. He reviewed the prize monies available for winners at post, county and department levels for this program and encouraged the Legionnaires present to support the program. He suggested that we contact home school organizations for candidates. Jerry also spoke about the Law Enforcement Academy at Fort McCoy which teaches high school seniors about law enforcement issues.

b. Badger Legionnaire/Public Relations

No report.

c. Camp American Legion

Mike Burk

As Department Camp American Legion Chairman, he reported on recent construction and upgrade work carried out at Camp American Legion. Mike spoke about the meaning of the wall, how he helped build the Wetzels Way trail, also known as the Veterans Trail, at Camp American Legion in memory of friends he knew and mentored him in his career. He described the activity of the Camp Committee and highlighted the oversight role of the committee and the value of their study of projects under consideration and throughout the planning and implementation stages. In response to a question, he reviewed recent renovation work on the main lodge. He also spoke about the need to balance wants and needs in order to keep things in working order.

d. Children and Youth

Ron Fregien

No report.

e. Convention Activity

Arien Herminath

Arien spoke about activities of the last Convention Activities Committee Meeting, focusing on the review and approval of convention plans and reports.

f. Finance/Fund Raising

Jerry Krofta

The Finance Committee is reconsidering work with USAA to raise funds for the support of department programs. They are also considering cutting the number of yearly print issues of the Badger Legionnaire from ten to six per year to save money. The number of online issues of the Badger Legionnaire will remain unchanged. He also reported on efforts to track fund raising donors to cut the cost of broad mailings. Jerry reported on the department sweepstakes and how changes were under consideration. Commander Fregien added that changes had already been made and only cash prizes would be offered.

h. Homeless Vets

Jim Young

A wing of McArthur 2 Hall at King Veterans Home has been set aside for homeless vets. Homeless vets are currently housed at King under a one-year program to provide them with health care and help them prepare for a job.

i. Hospital

Jim Young

Jim reminded the Legionnaires that money for veterans at King has to be sent to Department and earmarked for use at King Veterans Home.

12. Commander Fregien adjourned the conference for lunch.

13. After lunch, Commander Fregien introduced Major General Mark E. Anderson, Deputy Commanding General, Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC), Fort Eustis, VA. General Anderson began by thanking the 8th District for this opportunity to speak to a large group of fellow veterans. He commented that he had been in uniform for over 36 years and received one of his first Officer Efficiency Ratings from former Department of Wisconsin Commander Jim Reigel who was present today. General Anderson said he is from Wisconsin Rapids and is a member of American Legion Post 9 and the VFW. He is an artilleryman by profession but started out as an enlisted soldier before attending Officer Candidate School. General Anderson summarized his career assignments and commands during the past 36 plus years. He then spoke about the three elements of the U.S. Army: the regular Army, the National Guard, and the Army Reserve. As an organization they total 1.018 million people in uniform. Training and Doctrine Command, where he serves, sets and monitors standards of training for these soldiers throughout their entire careers for all three components of the U.S. Army. The National Guard is the combat reserve for the Regular Army and the organization of the two components is very similar from a combat arms perspective. The National Guard actually has the preponderance of the infantry brigades and only slightly less armored and striker brigades in the U.S. Army. Wisconsin has the 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team which is a light infantry brigade. The Army Reserve is predominately the enabler force. They have many of the logisticians, medical corps, and aviation specialties that have also experienced front line service in areas like Iraq and Afghanistan. The U.S. Army is currently going through some very formative events. The number one emphasis for all three components is readiness. From 9/11 until two or three years ago the emphasis was on counterinsurgency operations. We were deployed overseas in Forward Operating Bases and, by in large, not focused on large-scale combined arms combat operations like we experienced in World War II, Korea, or Vietnam. The mentality today is to bring our combat brigades up to the point where they can "fight tonight." Up to now, we have been able to dictate the time and place where we will engage our enemy. We have not had U.S. soldiers exposed to enemy aviation since Korea. However, we are now training for large-scale operations against peer and non-peer competitors like Russia and China. These two countries have made significant changes to their armed forces while we have been engaged in counterinsurgency operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Our current focus is on ground, air, sea, space, and cyberspace operations and we must compete and win in all five domains in order to secure the interests of the United States. He added that the recruitment of young people interested in military service has changed. Less than three of ten young people eligible for military service meet the physical, mental, and moral characteristics necessary for military service. Young people are often unaware that the military services offer training in more than 150 occupational areas, only 10 of which are combat arms, that would help them in their career development. The armed forces are science,

technology, engineering, math (STEM) oriented organizations. The equipment that soldiers are asked to utilize is extremely technical and calls for both skill and desire to operate properly. Of the 30% of those qualified to serve in the military, less than 10% have a desire to serve. A big challenge today is to get young people to realize the value of military service to them, both personally and professionally, either full time, or part-time with the National Guard, or Army Reserve. General Anderson then spoke about several initiatives the Army is undergoing other than the shift to prepare for large-scale military operations against peer and near peer competitors. As you know, the Chinese and Russians have gotten really good with their cyber operations. The recent Russian incursions into Ukraine several years ago started with cyber operations. Our armed forces now realize that we will not be able to deploy to future operational areas uncontested. For example, in Desert Shield and Desert Storm after Saddam Hussein crossed into Kuwait, we moved into Saudi Arabia at our pleasure with no fear of being attacked to the point of our forces being destroyed. We moved in, set up and, at the time of our choosing, crossed the line and engaged the enemy. We are pretty sure that when we move in and set up somewhere in the future, we are going to be contested here in the United States. That may be by cyber, but it will be to influence or disrupt our efforts to get wherever we have to go. Therefore, the aforementioned multidomain operations (air, land, sea, space, and cyberspace) are areas we are paying a lot of attention to. General Anderson then spoke about the physicality of military service. The Army is changing its culture with regards to overall fitness. It is under the title of holistic health and fitness. We are moving away from the former five- or three-area Army fitness test and going back to a six-area test. The new test will call for more physicality, more activity on the part of soldiers to ensure that they are fit. This is not just aerobics, being able to run, do pushups and sit-ups. In fact, pushups are being phased out and sit-ups are being modified. We are now doing some weightlifting, dead lifts, a thing called standing power throw, dead man carry, pushing sleds, pullups and then at the end another two-mile run. It is a huge shift across the Army, National Guard and Army Reserve that will take a few years to implement. There is some anxiety in the force, but most of those who have participated in the change have found it quite invigorating, or at least significantly different from what they are used to. The army is also working to bring better health to our formations from a nutrition perspective, to have personal athletic trainers available to soldiers to teach them to work out smartly so they don't injure themselves. All this is to decrease what is known as the non-deployable element of the Army resulting from injuries related to training or working out. One last thing, the Army is once again changing its uniform. The Army green uniform was phased out five or six years ago. However, we are reconnecting with our past and going back to the World War II era uniforms. We will bring back the style and color and get back to where less is better. Even the Ike jacket is coming back. This program is being introduced this year and the new uniforms will be issued to soldiers next year. Its purpose is to reconnect

today's soldiers with the soldiers we now refer to as the greatest generation. While this initiative will not necessarily improve readiness, it will hopefully improve morale because it will allow our soldiers to reconnect with the Army's past. General Anderson commented that of the 1.018 million soldiers in the Army, 335,000 serve in the National Guard as the operational combat reserve. Twenty-seven of fifty-four infantry brigades, fifty percent of aviation brigades, and sixty-seven percent of engineer and field artillery brigades in the Army reside in the Army National Guard. There is no way that the Army is going to war in the future without the National Guard and the Army Reserve. All three forces must be blended together and train together. This is where TRADOC comes in. The education that we provide to the soldiers in all three components has to be the same. The National Guard has to be fully operational. For example, since 9/11 we have deployed over 600,000 soldiers to Iraq and Afghanistan. Right now, we have a little over 24,000 soldiers deployed overseas. Our Wisconsin 1st Battalion, 124th Field Artillery HQs in Milwaukee just came home from a year-long deployment where they were spread across six countries providing operational field artillery fire to various U.S. Army formations. The National Guard also serves as first responders for civil authorities here at home. For example, last year alone National Guard soldiers provided 1.4 million man-days on the borders in an active duty status to provide support to civil authorities. Here in Wisconsin, the National Guard has responded to national disasters, most recently floods and snowstorms, but is also capable of responding to civil disturbances. In closing, we could not do everything asked of us without some of the best and brightest young men and women that chose to serve. They raised their right hand to defend our Constitution against all enemies, foreign and domestic. We are blessed to continue to have great men and women who continue to do that. We are even more blessed by having great service organizations such as yourself to provide support, both direct and indirect, to our military service members and to their families. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today about what the Army and National Guard is doing. In response to a question about military deployments to our southern border, General Anderson said there were both Army and National Guard soldiers currently deployed on our southwestern border. We are nonpolitical and subservient to the civil authorities and if ordered to deploy will step out smartly. But even with 1.018 million soldiers, we are deployed in 140 countries around the world. Not all deployments are combat operations, but we are engaged in partnership building, work directly with those countries' militaries, help bring governance back to their countries, improve the rule of law, and help their militaries services gain in professionalism. We also respond to humanitarian crises, which also draws on our manpower. If we are deployed along the border, there will have to be a tradeoff in some other areas. As senior military officers it is our responsibility to advise our civil authorities and, when our civil authorities tell us this is what you're going to do, we will go. Our forces deployed along the border are doing a great job with the resources provide to them. In

response to a question about headgear as part of the upcoming uniform change, General Anderson said the garrison cap would return and officer headgear would lose much of its current decoration. In response to a question about bringing back the draft, General Anderson said he was personally not in favor of it. We have been a volunteer force since Vietnam and, in his opinion, we need a military force that truly wants to be there and truly wants to serve. We demand a tremendous amount of our service men and women with regard to their time, personal, and family sacrifice. It does not matter which component. A lot of our equipment is getting extremely technical and consequently one of our biggest challenges is that we are battling corporate America for the exact same type of individual that they are looking for. We are looking for individuals with discipline, who show up for work on time, are drug free, possess good mental capacity with a desire to learn, and are of good character, all the traits that any employer is looking for in their workforce. We are in competition to a certain degree, but I think we can also be very complementary. The holistic health program mentioned earlier is also part of a larger program called soldier for life. Once a soldier, even if you take that uniform off and return to civilian life you remain a soldier for life. I believe that the character development that we instill in our soldiers can translate into great civilian opportunities, and we see that every day. Personally, I do not see us going back to a draft for those reasons. We would still be drawing from about thirty percent of the population because, regrettably, our young men and women today are not as strong physically as we were. We have changed how we do basic training over the past five or six years because we were breaking our male and female trainees at an astounding rate. They had simply not grown up doing the physical activities that we did. Trainees today were breaking hips, legs, and knees not because of falls, but because their bodies could not stand up to the rigors of ruck marching. We changed the way we provide initial training to our soldiers. We give new trainees an Occupational Physical Aptitude Test (OPAT) and, based on how they score, we determine the job opportunities open to them. This test is similar to the mental exam that is given to trainees when they join the armed forces. If you want to be an infantry soldier or an artilleryman, you have to achieve a certain score because we don't want to break you during that training. If you want to want that specialty, you are going to have to prepare yourself physically before you are accepted for training. The focus today is on quality rather than quantity. We would like to see the Army grow a little bit because of the demands on the organization across the world. But he would rather see an organization that is dedicated, highly fit, motivated and slightly understrength rather than have that extra fifteen percent.

14. Kent Falstad, then spoke about current events at King Veterans Home.
15. Department Adjutant Amber Nicolai spoke about the 100th Anniversary Celebration and other upcoming events at the Department Convention.
16. Department SAL Vice Commander Allen Watry then came forward and spoke about submissions for SAL awards. He congratulated the 8th District for continue high membership of its Squadrons. He spoke about the Josh Dog

program here in Wisconsin and how 500 kits were distributed to the families of deployed veterans last year.

17. Commander Fregien then called for a continuation of the District Chairman reports:

j. King Day Pilgrimage Jean Balz

Jean reminded the Legionnaires to attend the event and pick up their post membership information for the coming year.

k. Legion Riders Ron Fregien

No report

l. Legislative Kathy Gorst

She spoke of a resolution at Department to combine the VA&R, Policy and Legislative Committee functions in an effort to become more proactive in our policy agenda. The Legislative Committee would like to promote their agenda on line as well in order to better inform the membership of what they are trying to accomplish. She added that there were no nominees this year for Legislator of the Year. She stressed the importance of nominating legislators who support and promote American Legion legislation. She spoke about State Bill AB151, currently working its way through the state legislature, which has to do with the care of veterans' graves. The bill allots \$10,000 per county for the care of veterans' graves under the supervision of the County VSO Officers, and makes \$5.00 available per grave for the organization providing care. On the national level, there is a bill in Congress that would expand the membership eligibility for the American Legion. The bill has only 53 sponsors so far, 48 of them in the House of Representative. We are invited to contact our Representatives and Senators to urge them to support the above bill. She also spoke of several initiative in committee at the state level that might affect veterans here in Wisconsin. In response to a question on the Blue Water Bill, Kathy said she said that everyone we know who would be eligible under the bill should contact their VSO and apply for benefits. This would make the veteran eligible for back-dated benefits, even if the legislation did not go into effect for several years.

k. Membership Ron Fregien

He listed the 100% posts and the posts lacking one or two members to reach that goal. He encouraged all posts to continue their hard work to reach out to all delinquent members and encourage them to pay their dues.

l. POW/MIA Jim Young

No Report.

m. National Security Jim Young

Jim summarized the activity at the last National Security Committee meeting. He mentioned that there would be a blood drive at the upcoming Department Convention. He emphasized that nomination paperwork for EMT of the Year and other awards have to be completed properly in order to be considered.

n. Religious Emphasis Mark Melton

Included in previous report.

o. VA&R Dan Rindt

Dan reviewed the activities of the Mid-Winter VA&R Committee meeting. He outlined a number of veteran-related initiatives endorsed by the committee.

16. District Program Director Reports:

a. Americanism and Government Testing Arien Herminath
Online participation in this year's program was significantly higher than last year. In fact, increase in student participation overwhelmed the on-line system which is being revamped to handle the increased workload.

b. King Day Jean Balz
Jean said the parade route might be a bit different from last year due to ongoing construction at King. They also have a different caterer for the chicken dinner, but the prices remain the same. Parade at 1300, program at 1330, and in case of rain the program will be held indoors.

c. Badger Boys State Jean Balz
She did not receive a report from Department, but it remains a very important program. It will be held at Ripon College this June.

d. Baseball Arien Herminath
He gave a quick review of the Baseball Committee meeting. Highlights included their intention to expand the program this year. High school baseball programs are running longer each year and dates for some of our late summer games are still in flux. One Legionnaire mentioned that attendance at games is down and we have to look into ways to increase attendance in order to raise money to help pay expenses. This problem will be brought to the attention of the Baseball Committee.

e. Blood Doner Jim Young
Given as part of an earlier report.

f. County Youth Government Arien Herminath
He reported that over 104 students attended the 2019 Waupaca County Youth Government Day program this year. Shawano County Commander Marien added that Shawano County also had a very successful County Youth Government Day program with 71 students in attendance.

g. Oratorical Jerry Krofta
No report

h. Boy Scouts Richard Marien
Ron said submissions for the Eagle Scout of the Year award are due at Department Headquarters not later than March 1st. Legionnaire Gorst mentioned that there is legislation in process that may reflect on transgender children joining the boy scouts or girl scouts. We will have to react to the new legislation if/when it goes into effect. She added that it would be better to be proactive rather than reactive to the new legislation. If you act reactively, you might do the wrong thing.

i. SAL Dan Rindt
Dan reported that the three SAL Squadrons in the 8th District achieved 100% membership this past year.

17. Old Business:

None.

18. New business:

- a. Commander Fregien asked if anyone would like to serve as a Delegate or Alternate at the National Convention. There were no volunteers.
- b. He also asked if anyone would like to serve as an Assistant Sergeant at Arms at the National Convention in Indianapolis. There were no volunteers.
- c. Commander Fregien called for the election of 8th District Officers:

- Jim Young was elected 1st Sergeant at Arms
- Joyce Elker was elected 2nd Sergeant at Arms
- Ron Fregien was elected Finance Officer
- Historian, no nominations
- Matt Harn was elected Chaplain
- Cathy Gorst was elected Judge Advocate
- John Zychowitz was elected 3rd Vice Commander
- Mark Melton was elected 2nd Vice Commander
- Mike Burt was elected 1st Vice Commander
- Jean Baltz was elected Commander

- c. Legionnaires Jim Jaeger, David Jensen, and Will Pope volunteered to serve as Ballot Clerks at the Department Convention. Jim Young volunteered to serve as an Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms at the Department Convention.

- d. Commander Fregien asked for volunteers to attend standing committee meetings at the Department Convention. Legionnaire Krofta volunteered to attend the Americanism meeting; Legionnaire Fregien volunteered to attend the C&Y meeting; Legionnaire Pope volunteered to attend the Finance meeting; Legionnaire Gorst volunteered to attend the Legislative meeting; Legionnaire Herminath volunteered to attend the Constitutional Amendments meeting; and Legionnaire Burt volunteered to attend the Veterans Affairs meeting. Commander Fregien will ask for volunteers to attend other standing committee meetings at the 8th District Caucus.

19. Past Department Commander Jim Reigel spoke about the American Legion Foundation which was founded ten years ago. At the last meeting of the foundation it was decided to raise twenty million dollars to support the Department. This money would allow us to support the Department's two major programs, the Service Office and Camp American Legion. Each program would have a budget of four hundred thousand dollars. In order to fund these two programs out of interest we need to raise that kind of money. So how do we do that? Of course we are going to talk to a lot of rich people. But we are also talking to members about what they can do to help. IRA holders over seventy years of age have to withdraw a certain amount from their accounts each year. For those who can live without it, that money can be donated directly to a charity and will not add to your income for tax purposes. This could help the Foundation build the amount it needs to fund its programs from interest. With the decline in membership and number of veterans, this is one way we can save the above two programs. Another thing we can do is pass along the names any wealthy contacts we may know of. Perhaps they would be willing to help the American Legion Foundation. Another thing they might consider is to fund one of the above programs for a

- year. The financial challenges of the future have to be addressed or we will have to make some big changes.
20. Chaplain Melton 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. Chaplain Melton asked for a moment of silence for our departed comrades and gave a closing prayer.
 21. There being no further business to come before the 2019 8th District Spring Conference, Commander Fregien closed the meeting per proper protocol and adjourned at 1500 hours.

Respectfully submitted,
Arien Herminath
8th District Adjutant