Saying Goodbye to the State Arsenal—Home to the Nebraska National Guard Museum (1981-2014)

A Message from the Society President

Season’s greetings to each one of you. We are approaching the end of 2014, with much accomplishment. During 2014, the Society and Museum had a total of 54 individual volunteer’s that worked a total of 2,771 volunteer hours - a very significant time commitment done over the last seven months of the year. A heartfelt thanks to each of you that volunteered your time in support of the museum. A total of 56 additional artifacts and history books were assessed into the collection as well. We are now almost three months into the main floor - $2.1 million renovation project with an anticipated ribbon cutting still planned for July 4, 2015. The Society’s Fund Raising Committee, Led by Mr. Chuck Matzke; has had several successes over the past quarter to include ongoing pledges of support from both Jones and Cattle Bank’s located in Seward, NE. These successes have allowed us to activate the design contract for the museum concept and display design with a military museum architectural firm that will be kicking off this work in early February 2015. The Society has also worked out an agreement with Concordia College located in Seward to begin providing interns to support the museum operations beginning in January and running through their second semester. For the second year in a row, a team lead by Mr. Ted Guenther; will be teaching a five-week military history of World War II series with the University of Nebraska - Kearney adult education program this coming-spring. As always, we are grateful for any financial or volunteer support that can be provided for all of our ongoing projects. We have a great story to tell, so please help us spread the word.

Our Mission:

To collect, access, preserve, store, account for, de-militarize, and value historical artifacts and records for training, development, and interpretation of the Nebraska Army and Air National Guard and the State of Nebraska military history and heritage of its citizen-soldiers and airmen. To educate and “tell the story” to the members of the Army and Air Guard and the general public about the heritage of the Nebraska National Guard in both peace and war.
Progress on the Museum

Phase II construction is progressing along to the July 4, 2015 dedication date. Hundreds of sub-contractors are working all aspects of the building renovation. Lacey Construction of Wahoo is the primary contractor under the direction of BVH Architects and CFMO. Phase II is a federally funded $2.1 million upgrade of the building and exterior grounds. Exterior work started shortly after the appropriation on October 1st with demo crews ripping up sidewalks and digging in new water piping to the museum. Interior work also started with ripping up the front main office to make room for the gift shop and new double door entrance. Men’s shower room was demo’d to make room for the new mechanical room. The theater and “I Am the Nebraska National Guard” rooms are framed and ready for dry wall work. The Weapons Display Room is framed and ready for completion and donor cabinets and security systems. The Library and Conference Rooms are framed and ready for dry wall. Looking for a donor to take on the Canteen (1940’s style soda fountain) where the kitchen used to be. Check out more pics on Facebook.

Help with World War II Artifacts

Start looking to your attic and storage areas in your home. We are getting ready for the Architects and Engineers to come to Seward in February to design the new displays and exhibits. We have need to acquire as much 134th Infantry, 110th MED, and 35th/110th QM items from World War II. This will help to build the “Cornrow to Hedgerow” Exhibit and displays. Contact the museum if you wish us to assess your artifacts for possible use in the collection.

FRIEND US ON FACEBOOK: NEBRASKA NATIONAL GUARD MUSEUM
Local Seward Banks Support the Museum

The design of the new museum will be completely largely in part from the generous donation of the two local banks in Seward. Cattle Bank and Jones Banks in Seward each gave a $20,000 donation to hire the Architect and Engineering Firm of HealyKohler (www.healykohler.com) to start design work for Phase III exhibits. HealyKohler was instrumental in design of exhibits at the National Infantry Museum in Georgia.

Max Wake made the presentation at Jones Bank to Mr. Willis Heyen, first commander of the Seward unit at the new armory in 1957. “We are very fortunate to have the museum in Seward and we look forward to having it as a cornerstone of tourism to the community in the future” said Max Wake at the presentation.

Becky Vahle and Ryne Seaman made the presentation at Cattle Bank to Ken Meyer, former member of the Seward unit and Nebraska National Guard Society member. “The bank and its employees are excited to support this historical museum and the many men and women who have served our country so bravely throughout our country’s history” said Ryne Seaman, President and CEO of Cattle Bank.

Both banks have a rich history of support in the community of Seward. One just needs to look around at the college, hospital, library and other buildings to see their philanthropy. Thank you to both banks for the support!
The Rivoli Theater hosted veterans for the premier showing of the World War II tank movie “Fury” during Veterans Day week in Seward. The owners of the Rivoli, Chuck and Julie Wisehart, hosted the event for over 150 persons at the two showings. Veterans were admitted free of charge and there was a display of World War II artifacts from the museum in the display window and in the front entrance for patrons to view. Cody Cade set up the displays. The “Fairbury Tank” was brought out to the front of the courthouse yard for display to help promote the event. The tank was a conversation starter and was seen by many due to its location along Highways 34 and 15 at the heart of Seward. The tank is a 1/6 scale wooden model of the tanks seen in the movie. Moviegoers were treated to hands on artifacts from the museum that were also shown in the movie. Due to the success of this premier the Wiseharts’ have set January 9th, 2015 for the premier of the movie “Unbroken” about a World War II POW. The museum has artifacts and is looking for a veteran of the Pacific campaign that was a POW.

Join the Nebraska National Guard Historical Society today! Help us to tell “our story” for future generations.

Application form on page 13.

CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE: WWW.NNGHS.ORG

Breaking out wall between Weapons Display and Hedgerow Exhibit

Seward Independent promoting the guard in the 50’s
Concordia University Internships to Museum

Concordia University in Seward is providing several internship opportunities for students in the Spring, 2015 semester. Two students in the history department, Annalisa Holmgren and Sean Berry have been nominated by Professor of History John Hink to support the museum curator in artifact restoration and cataloging. In addition to those duties the interns will assist the museum in a traveling display on Chaplains to be shown at the university upon completion. Concordia has opened the door to the society and the museum for intern and also service learning support in the future. Jeanny Roebke, Provost for the school, has been instrumental in developing the relationship with the college and the museum. Professors in other areas have been invited to and toured the museum to build other opportunities for connection to the school. The museum would like to thank the university for the support and look forward to the future partnership in the community of Seward.

1957 Commander in Seward Visits Museum

The first commander of the Headquarters, Headquarters Company, Second Battalion, 134th Infantry in Seward to command in the new armory in 1957, Willis Heyen, stopped and visited the museum in December to help with finding past members of the Nebraska National Guard. Willis was invited by Dick Stillahn, a former member of the Seward unit. Stillahn assists the museum on the Education Committee and Foundation to find former members and ask for their support to the museum. Willis shared stories of attending drill at the Auditorium in Seward prior to the dedication of the armory in 1957. He also assisted the museum in finding former members up in David City that were still around.
Where we came from.....

Looking back on the artifacts in the museum we have come across many records from the society and the history of the museum. In the late 70’s, volunteers got together to form the Society and find a new home and collect artifacts. Those volunteers acquired the State Arsenal building near the entrance to the State Fair Grounds in the early 80’s and began to fill the building with our Army and Air Guard history. We will always be in awe of what they did with little money and many hours of volunteer time. We hope that the new museum will continue the legacy that they started back in the day to “tell our story”. They are always welcome to come out to Seward and share those stories.

Acting Governor Thomas B. Cumming issues a proclamation on December 23, 1854: “recommending that the citizens of the territory organize, in their respective neighborhoods, into volunteer companies.” This was the state’s first call for a legally authorized and organized militia to protect its citizens. The Birthday of the Nebraska National Guard.

The new Nebraska National Guard Museum is honoring the state’s legacy in aviation with the inclusion of a replica Curtis Model D hanging above the chronological collection. The plane is in honor of CPT Castle Schaffer and CPT Ralph McMillen, who both purchased an aircraft on their own, and assembled them in Fremont. In 1915, the governor authorized them to fly around the state to drum up support for aviation in Nebraska. On July 15th of that year, the Nebraska National Guard officially organized an Aviation Corps in Lincoln out at the fairgrounds. On August 15th, while on summer camp with the 4th Infantry Division, McMillen dropped munitions from an aircraft and advanced a forward thinking concept. LT Edgar Bagnell joined the NE Aviation Corps and became the first Nebraska aviator to receive an Army pilot certificate in 1916.

The replica Curtis Model D is being put together under the direction of State Command Chief Master Sergeant Mark Forster. If you can assist, please contact him at: 402-309-8118 or Mark.G.Forster.mil@mail.mil
Anniversaries

- JAN 4, 1945: 134th INF Capture of Lutrebois during the Battle of the Bulge and later receiving its fourth Distinguished Unit Citation of the war.
- JAN 5, 1949: Operation Snowbound in which over 500 guardsmen from 15 units and the Air Guard would respond for a period of eight weeks to the historic blizzard of 49'.
- JAN 23, 1856: The 1856 Militia Bill was passed establishing yearly training schedules, and for the first time, rules and regulations on volunteers.
- FEB 8, 1862: Companies A and D of the Nebraska Battalion of the Curtis Horse Cavalry Regiment involved in Battle for Fort Donelson.
- FEB 14, 1862: 1st NE involved in the Battle for Fort Donelson.
- MAR 25, 1945: 134th INF crossed the Rhine into Germany during WWII.
- JAN 27, 1972: GOV Exon swears in the first three women into the Nebraska National Guard.

The Nebraska National Guard Historical Society

Board of Directors:

Bryon Diamond—President
Hobie Rupe—Legal Counsel
Michael Wilson—VP—COO
David Petersen—VP—CFO
David Nore—Secretary
Robert Kadavy—Treasurer

Executive Committee Chairs:

Kevin Hynes—NNG PAO
Erin Hanson—Collections Comm Chair
Mark Forster—Display Comm Chair
Nicole Nuss—Volunteer Coord Chair
Eric Clyne—Logistics Committee Chair
Chuck Matzke—Fund Raising Chair
Ted Guenther—Outreach Committee Chair
Ken Meyer—Special Projects Chair
Kevin Hittle—Master Planning Chair
Cody Cade—Army National Guard LNO
Wendy Johnson—ANG LNO
Gerald D. “Jerry” Meyer—NG Historian

New Lifetime Memberships:

Byron Diamond
David Petersen
Eric Clyne
Daniel Kenkel
David DuBois
Mark Forster
Charles Matzke
Kenneth Meyer
Gerald Meyer
Eric Teegerstrom

Organization/Business Memberships:

Beatrice Company C Reunion Committee
FastMart—Seward
Baskin Robbins—Seward
American Legion Post#346—Liberty, NE
Berry Law Firm—Lincoln, NE
Cattle National Bank—Seward
Jones Bank—Seward

National Guard Soldiers pose for picture in front of a Higgins Boat LCVP on a visit to the National World War II Museum in New Orleans, LA. They were special guests of the museum for a tour of the restoration facilities prior to deploying to Afghanistan in 2010. The museum is in New Orleans because of Nebraska National Guard member, Andrew Jackson Higgins, of Columbus. His company produced over 21,000 landing craft for the war effort. The museum honored him in 2000 by locating the museum in the city where he made the boats. Columbus has the Andrew Jackson Higgins National Memorial in Pawnee Park.
Major General Warren C. Wood (Warren Claypool Wood) was born in Gering, Nebraska on June 28, 1908, to Asa Butler Wood and Maggie Claypool Wood. Warren enlisted in the Nebraska National Guard in March, 1924, with Headquarters 2nd Battalion, 134th Infantry. He remained with this unit advancing through the ranks all the way to First Sergeant. Warren attended the University of Nebraska graduating in 1930. In 1932, Wood accepted a commission as a 2nd Lieutenant in the Infantry assigned to Howitzer Company, 134th Infantry, stationed in Gering his home-town. He achieved the rank of 1st Lieutenant on May 13, 1939. On December 23, 1940 the President of the United States called upon the Nebraska National Guard to participate in a year of training. The 134th Infantry Regiment answered the President’s call and boarded trains headed for Camp Joseph T. Robison, Arkansas.

First Lieutenant Wood became the Executive officer of F Company, 2nd Battalion, while at Camp Robison, the Regiment participated in the Louisiana Maneuvers. The Regiment out performed units under the command of General George Patton. Just as the Regiment was finishing their year of training the Imperial Japanese Navy attacked the U.S. Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. This event ended all hope of returning to Nebraska in a year and extended them for the duration of the war. The 134th Infantry would spend the next two and a half years training state-side. During this time, Wood again advanced through the ranks achieving: Captain February 27, 1942, commanding Anti-Tank Company, 3rd Battalion, 134th Infantry, commanding the Headquarters, Headquarters Company of the 35th Infantry Division. On May 11, 1944 the 134th Infantry Regiment, boarded the transport ship A.E. Anderson and set sail for England.

Once in England the Regiment underwent intensive training. On June, 26 they were inspected by General Eisenhower, and Patton who were so impressed with the performance that the regiment shortly received orders to move to France, landing on Omaha Beach at D+30. On July 13th the regiment began combat operations in France. For the next ten months, the regiment would be engaged in some of the heaviest fighting of the European Theater. Major Wood was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel on September 30, 1944, as 3rd Battalion commander. Wood distinguish himself several times, displaying his unique leadership skills and courage. On several occasions, he took charge while chaos and death rained down around him. He would lead his unit to ultimate victory in 1945 but, the price was high. The regiment, as a whole suffered a three hundred percent casualty rate. During 264 days of combat, Wood earned the Silver Star with oak leaf cluster, Bronze Star with two oak leaf clusters, Purple Heart with oak leaf cluster, Presidential Unit Citation with oak leaf cluster, American Defense Service medal, American Campaign Medal, African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal with 5 stars, and the Combat Infantryman Badge.

Latter on after the war, he would become commander of the 134th Infantry on October 17, 1946, with the rank of Colonel, and would play a pivotal role in the reorganization of the guard during the 1950’s. On March 28, 1948 he achieved the rank of Brigadier General assigned as the assistant commander of the 34th Division, and Major General Commander of the division on September 1, 1954. On November 27, 1963, after 30 years of service, Major General Warren C. Wood retired from active service, earning the 30 year Nebraska National Guard Service Medal.
Blast From the Past......

70th Anniversary of the Battle of the Bulge in 1944. Nebraska soldiers serving in the 134th Infantry Regiment, 110th MED and 35th/110th QM played a major role in the largest land and costliest battle of World War II. The Society and Museum salute the veterans of the past. Thank you for your service and dedication to this great country. The new Nebraska National Guard Museum is being built as a testament to your courage and service and will tell your story for generations to come.

Focus on Volunteers:

Chuck Matzke is the fundraising point of contact for the society. His experience in being the past president of Jones Bank, in Seward, has made him a well known individual around the state. He is a former member of the Nebraska National Guard and served with the Seward unit. Chuck and his wife, Jan, are pillars of the community and we are so glad to have them onboard with the museum.

Eric Clyne is the logistics guru behind the scenes for the society. The movement of the collection from the Arsenal to Seward was in large part due to his many hours of volunteering, along with his wife and kids. He is the first person the museum calls when there are things that need to be acquired or purchased. He is also the main point of contact in ensuring that the artifacts are accounted for and reported up. Eric is a great example of the can do spirit of the guard. Thanks for your great help!
More Pics from the Museum……

Jeeps and equipment outside of the bay to allow construction below the main assembly hall floor.

Electrical work being completed in the dirt area below the main assembly hall floor.

Duke workers breaking the entrance to the “I Am the Nebraska National Guard” exhibit off the main assembly floor.

New water lines connecting to the city system. Warm weather allowed for progress outside to keep ahead of schedule.

Duke workers jack-hammering the door frames to an exhibit room.

Framing in the Hedgerow room.
Berry Law Firm has stepped up to the plate to support the museum with marketing capital to invest in high tech design exhibits. John Berry, who is also a current member of the Nebraska National Guard, was instrumental in working with the museum on a design for a “quiz station” similar to the one used at the “1968” traveling exhibit at the Durham in Omaha. This type of display will assist the museum in ‘checking for understanding” at the end of the visit and allow Berry Law Firm to market their firm. Thank you to Berry Law Firm for the capital to see this project through.
We would like to express our heartfelt gratitude for your interest in applying for membership in the Nebraska National Guard Historical Society, Inc.

We further provide the following information in order to qualify this document as a true attestation that the donations received will be used for purely non-profit purpose(s), in our capacity as a 501(c)(3) charitable or non-profit organization.

Name:__________________________________________________________
Address:________________________________________________________
City/State/Zip:____________________________________________________
E-Mail:___________________________________________________________

Applicant’s Signature:__________________________ Today’s Date:________

☐ Individual Lifetime $250.00       ☐ Organizational Lifetime $250.00
☐ Individual Annual $30.00         ☐ Annual Family $60.00
☐ Family Lifetime $500.00         ☐ Check
☐ Cash

This section to be filled out by the applicant and retained by the NNG Historical Society for their records.

This section to be filled out by a NNG Historical Society Officer and returned to the applicant for their tax records.

Name of Applicant:_____________________________________________
Type of Membership: ☐ Individual Lifetime ☐ Organizational Lifetime
☐ Individual Annual ☐ Annual Family ☐ Family Lifetime

NNG HISTORICAL SOCIETY WITNESSING OFFICER _______________________
SIGNATURE ___________________________ Date ______________________

This document is a true attestation that the donations received for purely non-profit purpose(s), of a 501(c)(3) charitable or non-profit organization.